



Thursday, March 8, 2018

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FRIENDS AND FAMILY REMEMBER CHRISTINA ON FIFTH ANNIVERSARY



Christina's parents Jason and Kathleen at memorial

THE family of Christina Edkins were joining pupils and teachers at her school in Halesowen for a minute's silence on the fifth anniversary of her death this week.

The teenager was stabbed by paranoid schizophrenic Philip Simelane on the top deck of a bus in Birmingham while on her way from Ladywood to Leasowes High School. Simelane, a paranoid schizophrenic, had been released from prison under no supervision just months prior to the attack.

Failings by the NHS and Ministry of Justice have since been highlighted.

At 11am yesterday (Wednesday) Christina's family were joining pupils and teachers at Leasowes High School for a minute's silence in her memory. Flowers were being

laid by her parents Jason and Kathleen at a memorial stone at the school. The family were also to visit Birmingham Cathedral, where Christina's funeral was held, for prayers. Sixteen-year-old Christina had hoped to become a nurse.

Her great uncle Chris Melia said: "It is an emotional day for the family who had their lives ripped apart on this day five years ago."

Simelane, 23, who had a history of mental health problems, was detained under the Mental Health Act after pleading guilty to manslaughter in 2013. An independent report published last year found major failings across the NHS and prison service over the handling of Simelane. The investigation

by Niche Health and Social Care Consulting said the attack, although preventable, was not predictable. It gave a list of 25 improvements to be carried out by agencies.

Christina's family fear 'very few' lessons have been learned and say they are still waiting to hear what improvements have been made.

Simelane had not been re-assessed for admission to a psychiatric hospital despite a request from a specialist registrar. Five months later he carried out the killing.

Mr Melia said: "If the registrar had been listened to, Christina would have been at university. It is facts like this which haunt the family."

● Lessons not learned – page 3

Plea for cameras to keep watch after incident

CCTV CALL TO COMBAT CRIME

CALLS have been made to install CCTV in Halesowen town centre in a bid to reduce crime.

The Halesowen Business Improvement District (BID), a community group run by traders, is spearheading the campaign.

The call follows an incident in Halesowen town centre when police were called to reports of a stabbing. Police were alerted at 7.25pm on Friday to reports of a disorder and ambulance crews also attended but officers did not find anyone injured.

West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman Claire Brown said: "We were called just before 7.30pm to reports of an assault outside The William Shenstone on Queensway. One ambulance attended but there was no sign of a patient at the scene."

Staff at The William Shenstone pub said they gave first aid to an injured member of the public and called the police.

Chairman of Halesowen BID Wayne Edwards said: "Incidents like this are a huge concern for traders and businesses in our town."

Solutions

"The Halesowen BID is working to improve security measures and cooperate with businesses to find solutions to put an end to this kind of criminal activity."

"We're keen for anyone who wishes to support our campaign for the installation of CCTV cameras to get in touch."

The call for CCTV comes after Halesowen Chronicle reported a crime wave was hitting the town and last week motorists were warned by police to remove valuables from cars following a spike in thefts from vehicles in the town.

Report by Jamie Brassington

The Halesowen BID has already outlined plans to install a radio network for traders so they can warn each other and police if thieves are active in the town's shops.

The move for CCTV has been welcomed by Halesowen North ward councillor Hilary Bills, who said: "I support this call. I think having CCTV will make people feel safer going into town."

Councillor Bills has previously pointed to fewer police due to Government spending cuts for a rise in crime in Halesowen.

Police revealed at a community forum meeting that crime had risen 14 per cent in the town.

Meanwhile, new figures show most crime is increasing across the borough and the Black Country has been shocked by a spate of stabbings.

● 2,000 crimes – page 3

Meet new Miss Black Country



Alexandra Darby (centre) with runners up Emma Pollard (right) and Lauren Hollins. Picture by Kev Wise.

A NEW Miss Black Country has been crowned – she is Alexandra Darby, from Rowley Regis, and is seen above with her trophy, alongside runners-up Lauren Hollins and Emma Pollard.

Alexandra has been named the winner of this year's contest and was awarded the coveted tiara

and sash at the Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill. She will now go through to the prestigious Miss England finals in August. The 22-year-old singer, who performs as a Taylor Swift tribute act, said: "I'm so excited and overwhelmed."

● Out of this world entrance – page 14

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POLICE

Stab victim found on steps of hotel

A MAN was left seriously injured on the steps of a Dudley hotel after being stabbed in broad daylight.

The 24-year-old was taken to hospital after being attacked outside The Village Hotel in Dudley at the weekend.

Police were called to the scene at around 11.30am on Sunday.

The victim suffered life-changing injuries in the incident off Birmingham Road but he is expected to survive, said police.

It is the latest in a spate of knife attacks in the Black Country, which included a 20-year-old man being attacked outside a restaurant at nearby Castle Gate last month.

EVENT

Summerfest pop line-up announced

R&B star Lemar, plus The X Factor's Matt Terry and duo Reggie 'n' Bollie have been announced for Summerfest at Himley Hall, a concert in aid of Mary Stevens Hospice.

The event, hosted by Signal 107, is to take place on July 15. "Early bird" tickets are being offered. See marystevenshospice.co.uk or call (01384) 377778.

● Music festival – page 15

FOOTBALL

Ex-Baggie Hughes signs on at Yeltz

FORMER West Bromwich Albion striker Lee Hughes has joined Halesowen Town.

The 41-year-old Smethwick-born striker enjoyed two spells with Baggies, scoring 99 goals, after making his name with Kidderminster Harriers.

He was most recently the player/joint manager at Worcester City.

● Full story – back page

INSIDE

THE FACE OF POOR BELLA?



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Trainee GP is cleared of assaults



Amirul Haque – acquitted

A TRAINEE GP has been cleared of sexually assaulting five patients in 10 days during a temporary posting at a Black Country surgery.

Amirul Haque was only a few weeks into a four-month placement at the Dudley practice when the allegations were made and police alerted, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

The 33-year-old said: "I am relieved by the verdict, and thankful to my family and friends for their continued support. I look forward to rebuilding my life and the opportunity of returning to practice in the future."

He was accused of thrusting his groin into the back of patients and unnecessarily placing his hands inside underwear and exposing breasts during consultations.

But the doctor suggested there may have been collusion between the five women and their complaints had not been made independently of each other. A post referring to the doctor's alleged behaviour had been put on Facebook before any patient had made an official complaint, the jury were told.

The defence suggested it would be reasonable to infer there may have

been collusion between some or all of the women.

Judge Amjad Nawaz told the jury that to convict they had to be sure that each complainant was acting independently without their evidence being 'contaminated' by that of any of others.

The defendant was nearing the end of his formal training following five years at medical school when he arrived at the Dudley practice.

The jury acquitted Dr Haque, from Ladypool Road, Balsall Common, of five charges of sexual assault.

Costs will be paid out of public funds.

'Abuse' of site's free car park will mean fines

CAMERAS have been installed at a retail park in a bid to clamp down on drivers 'abusing' its car park.

Shoppers have been warned they will be hit with fines if they over stay at Oldbury Green Retail Park.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras will now track when vehicles enter the retail park with those who stay longer than three hours hit with penalties.

The action has been taken because shopping centre bosses say motorists have been routinely staying longer than the three hours allowed.

Parking will continue to be free at the retail park off Oldbury Ringway, which has major stores including Argos and Next, but the cameras will monitor how long vehicles stay.

Bosses took action after growing frustrated with those who leave their cars at the centre, which has around 650 spaces, for hours and so deny spaces to shoppers. Signs will go up warning visitors that they will face fines if they overstay the parking limit.

The system will be run by Parking Eye on behalf of Workman, which manages Oldbury Green. Parking Eye stated: "The proposal seeks to provide management of the existing car park to reduce car park abuse and ensure that spaces are available for genuine site users."

Killer husband's fatal overdose in prison cell

A MAN who murdered his wife with a hammer in Netherton was found dead in his prison cell after overdosing on medication prescribed for a shoulder injury, a report has revealed.

Paul Abbott, 57, was handed a life sentence in July 2016 after he admitted to killing his wife Jackie, 54.

The attack in December 2015 saw Abbott strike his wife of 28 years, Jackie, at least 16 times with a hammer at their home in Lodge Crescent.

The killer was found dead at HMP Long Lartin in Worcestershire exactly a year on from the attack.

His death sparked an independent investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) – which concluded: "We consider that it would have been difficult for staff at Long Lartin to have foreseen or prevented his death."

The investigation found Abbott overdosed on the anti-inflammatory medication Naproxen which he was initially prescribed for a shoulder injury. He died after complications.

The PPO report stated: "There was little indication at Long Lartin that Mr Abbott was at a raised risk of suicide or self-harm in the days before his death, and it would have been difficult for staff to have reasonably predicted his actions. Although Mr Abbott gave away a number of his belongings the night before he was found dead in his cell, staff were unaware of this, prisoners thought it was an act of generosity."

Staff attempted CPR but were not able to save him. A jury at Worcestershire Coroners' Court in February concluded his death was suicide.

Paul Abbott – suicide

Purple praise hope for hospital hotline



Kam Dhami, director of governance, talks about the Purple Points initiative with patient Peter Broome

A HOSPITAL hotline has been introduced at a West Midlands trust to respond to concerns inpatients or their loved ones may have about care.

New Purple Points have been installed outside ward areas at Sandwell, City and Rowley Regis hospitals, which have phones that

link directly to a team of advisors. The aim is to address concerns quickly, before the patient is discharged.

The phones can also be used to compliment staff for the care they've given.

The move by Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

comes after a survey was conducted by Healthwatch Sandwell, a health watchdog, which found patients wanted concerns resolved in a more timely approach.

The phone line will be manned between 9am and 9pm every day. There are numbers for non-English speakers also.

Have a say over travellers' site

A CONSULTATION has been launched asking for the views of residents living nearby to a planned travellers' site in Coseley.

Dudley Council has submitted a planning application for the transit site to be built on Budden Road, after bosses approved proposals last month. Now residents living nearby are being given the chance to have their say, with the consultation running until March 24.

Council leader Patrick Harley said: "We want to put a stop to unauthorised camps. We believe that the Budden Road land is best placed to accommodate a temporary travellers transit site." To take part search for reference 'P18/0281' on the planning section of the council website, or write to Place Directorate, 4 Endnam Road, Dudley, DY1 1HL.

Care apartments OK

AN extra care development featuring 90 apartments designed for elderly people has been given the go-ahead in Rowley Regis.

The facility will be built on a 9,000 sq m site at Moor Lane, after it was backed by Sandwell Council planners.

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Council give £200k loan for college of music

COUNCIL bosses have agreed to step in and provide £200,000 for a new music college which has been threatened by funding issues.

The £31 million music institute is expected to open three years later than planned at The Waterfront in Brierley Hill in 2020.

Dudley Council was approached to provide a £200,000 loan as a fall back option 'should alternative funding currently being investigated not materialise'.

The institute, to become the Black Country's music college, was originally due to open in September 2017 but chiefs said its opening has been pushed back amid funding issues.

Brierley Hill councillor Zafar Islam said: "I hope the music institute will benefit not only Brierley Hill but the whole of the borough."

The college's backers are still seeking funding for the 'Resonance' project at The Waterfront, expected to create at least 43 jobs, with council bosses asked to stump up a £200,000 'bridging loan' by next January 'should alternative funding currently being investigated not materialise'.

Phases

David Barnard, co-director of Resonance, said: "There has been a very detailed due diligence process in terms of the funding but stars are beginning to align. We see Resonance launching in two phases. The first is the community phase and this will include staff recruitment activities in the community. The second phase will be the student intake and that is planned for 2020."

Meanwhile, a specialist music school is due to be built in West Bromwich by 2020.

The new site will be run as a free school and, though it will specialise in music, it will also offer the usual curriculum. It will be run by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

It is planned to open a year after new secondary school at Kelvin Way, which will be built on playing fields next to the M5 and will create 750 places. A sponsor will be brought on board to run the school at Kelvin Way.

There are also existing proposals in Sandwell to expand Q3 Academy in Langley, Ormiston Academy in Tividale and the RSA Academy in Tipton.

Wine weekend

THE Birmingham Wine Weekend will involve 21 venues across the city from March 23 to 25, and features wines from around the world.

A wristband will enable people to taste wines and get discounts on various events. See birminghamwineweekend.co.uk for details.

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Concern as borough hit by 2,000 crimes



Halesowen Councillor David Vickers

VEHICLE thefts in Dudley have increased more than a quarter in a year, while crime across the borough is up 13.6 per cent.

Dudley has seen recorded crime rise from 18,219 in 2016 to 20,700 last year. There have also been big increases in stolen vehicles, theft from vehicles and violent crime.

Halesowen Councillor David Vickers, who served as a police officer for 28 years, believes the true crime figures could even be worse.

"What I'm concerned about is the number of crimes not recorded which

means the situation could be worse," he said. "Looking at the figures now, yes the force is facing a challenging time with a cut in officers, which inevitably leads to an increase in crime."

The figures show in Dudley the rate of theft of vehicles has gone up 38.6 per cent, theft from vehicles 18.2 per cent and violent crime 18.3 per cent. Robbery has gone up 6.3 per cent. Burglary has gone down 3.4 per cent.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: "It is very concerning that crime is rising across the country and in the

West Midlands too. Crime in the area is still below the national average, but that is of little comfort if you are a victim. That is why I am continuing to drive efficiencies, reduce bureaucracy to enable police to focus on what the public want them to - tackling crime."

Mr Jamieson said he recognised the large increase in vehicle crime. He added: "I have ensured the West Midlands Police prioritise this crime, by tackling the chop shops, focussing on the identification and targeting of those premises used to dismantle stolen cars."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fire treated as arson, say police

A BLAZE that badly damaged a flat in Brierley Hill's High Street is being treated as arson, say police.

Crews from Brierley Hill and Stourbridge responded to a call shortly after 1am on Saturday to the unoccupied flat in a three-storey block.

Two neighbours had left the building by the time firefighters entered the property, using two hose-reel jets to extinguish a burning mattress.

Officers from West Midlands Police were called to assist with the suspected arson attack. No injuries were reported.

Fire crews left the scene shortly before 3am.

Record half-term figures at the zoo

DUDLEY Zoo enjoyed a record February half-term attendance.

The tourist attraction on Castle Hill saw 15,612 visitors go through the gates - more than double the number last February half-term when 6,528 made a visit.

Zoo director Derek Grove said: "This has been the best February half-term I can remember, it's been incredible. Some of our daily figures during the week were comparable to a good day in August, which is amazing."

"People definitely made the most of the dry weather."

Cocaine criminals hit in the wallet

CROOKS convicted in a multi-million pound cocaine racket, which involved drug dealers in Kingswinford and London-based Albanian gangsters, have been ordered to pay back more than £147,000.

Eight of the 14 criminals, who were last year jailed for a total of more than 100 years, have been forced to hand back some of the cash gathered from their criminal enterprise.

Much of the illegal activity happened within a half mile radius of Stallings Lane, Kingswinford, near the homes of some gang members.

MP gets debate on HMRC tax office axe

CONTROVERSIAL plans to close HMRC offices at Brierley Hill were due to be debated in Parliament this week.

Dudley North MP Ian Austin has urged Work and Pensions Secretary Esther McVey to rethink proposals that put the jobs at risk of 250 civil servants at the HMRC's tax credits office at the Waterfront. He secured a Parliamentary debate on the issue for last night (Wednesday).

Family fear lessons have not been learned

WHEN 16-year-old Christina Edkins left home for school, she kissed her family and went to catch the number 9 bus from Ladywood to Halesowen.

But the much-loved teenager who had plans to go to university and then become a nurse would never return.

At just before 8am paranoid schizophrenic Philip Simelane, who was travelling on the same bus, fatally stabbed her in a motiveless attack. Simelane had been released from prison less than three months earlier and, despite a history of mental health problems, was left unsupervised and homeless with just £46 in his pocket.

An independent report by Niche Health and Social Care Consulting uncovered failures by the NHS and prison service. These included not re-assessing Simelane for admission to a psychiatric hospital despite a request from a forensic specialist registrar.

The investigation found Christina's death was preventable, but was not predictable. The family have always challenged this. Five years since Christina's death her family say they still are waiting to hear what improvements have been made.

Warnings

Her great uncle Chris Melia said: "There were warnings over him and then opportunities missed. Until people accept there was individual culpability there will never be much progress."

The investigation gave a plan with 25 recommended actions to be taken by the NHS, Ministry of Justice and partnering agencies. It revealed a cry for help from Simelane's mother was ignored, professionals had not identified his risk of violence and agencies lost trace of him on release from prison.

A 'lessons learned' event was held by the NHS in September. The family were promised a report on the event but none has arrived.

Knife bins were introduced by the police with the family's support. Mr Melia was happy with legislation from the Government in 2015 which meant anyone caught in possession with a knife for a second time received a prison sentence.

Following a spate of stabbings in the region, Mr Melia supports a campaign by The Chronicle's sister newspaper the Express & Star for anyone caught with a knife on the first occasion to be given a mandatory prison sentence.



Christina Edkins' parents Jason and Kathy at Wednesday's memorial service in Halesowen



Christina Edkins, 16, died five years ago



Christina's great uncle Chris Melia with his wife Kay

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An event at Stourbridge Town Hall

A STOURBRIDGE sixth form college has launched a bid to run the town hall and has held 'advanced talks' with Dudley Council.

King Edward VI College, established in Stourbridge in 1552, wants to use the site for community events and as extra space for some activities.

College principal Remley Mann said: "This is good news for the town and good news for the college. Our plans are to preserve the current usage of the town hall providing an invaluable public building for the use of the community, as well as giving the college extra space for some of our activities."

"The college has played a key role in the community for over 500 years, so we are honoured to be guardians of this important building to secure its future as a focal point for the local community."

Under proposals, Dudley Council will make the hall, which opened in 1887, available under community asset transfer powers – enabling councils to transfer council-owned buildings to not-for-profit entities.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member for regeneration, said: "Stourbridge Town Hall is already a successful and popular venue and we believe, under the management of the college, it will continue to be enjoyed for generations to come."

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Campaign launched to help student after crash £10k target for bike rider paralysed in fall

A CAMPAIGN to support a young mountain biker from Brierley Hill who was paralysed after falling from his bike has raised almost £10,000 in less than a week.

Peter Lloyd, aged 21, broke his neck in August last year and has been left paralysed from the neck down.

Peter, who is a student at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, was a talented rider who had previously won podium places in a number of races.

The crash happened on the last 100 metres of a trail ride. He shattered a vertebra landing on his head.

Rallied

He then spent seven weeks in intensive care in Edinburgh before being transferred to the National Spinal Injuries Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow.

Now the mountain bike community has rallied behind a campaign to help Peter, raising £9,425 in less than a week.

Peter said: "I'm paralysed from the neck down now and use my chin to control my wheelchair."

"I still plan to live as well as my condition allows, along with my incredibly strong and supportive fiancee."

"I'm so thankful that I didn't suffer a head injury, so am still the same person I have always been."

Fellow mountain biker Ben Mills launched the appeal on crowd funding



Peter Lloyd on his bike. He shattered a vertebra and landed on his head after the fall

page JustGiving to support Peter's recovery and rehabilitation. Peter hopes to use the money for physiotherapy in America, as well as an adapted wheelchair.

He added: "Thank you so much to everybody for their very kind donations. In the future, I hope to use the funds to travel to America for intensive physiotherapy, along with any future clinical trials which might improve my condition."

"My other plans are to get a chin-controlled wheelchair to allow me to go riding with friends – even if it is rather different to how it was before – and to buy

an accessible van so that I can get around and also return to university to complete my degree in mechanical engineering."

Ben said: "Pete is going to need as much support, both emotionally and financially, as possible as he adapts to the changes he has been dealt and goes through rehabilitation."

He added: "Please dig deep whether you are a friend, fellow racer or part of the mountain biking community."

To support the appeal go to www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/petelloyd-down-notout



Peter Lloyd after the collision

A-Levels are phased out at college

STOURBRIDGE college is to scrap A-levels as part of a shift towards more vocational courses.

Bosses said A-levels in core subjects such as maths and English would not be offered after they are phased out over the next 18 months.

Current A-level students would not be affected, the college says.

The college, run by Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet), will instead be aiming to 'develop and grow its vocational education offer' as well as expanding its apprenticeship programme.

BMet will be creating a new A-level centre of excellence at Sutton Coldfield College as part of the shake-up.

Head of Stourbridge College Gill Coldicott said: "We do understand there may be some concerns; the decision to consolidate our A-level offer and to phase-out A-levels at the college has not been taken lightly and was made after consultation with our staff and students."

Students can discuss their options with college staff at an event next Wednesday, March 14.

Murder charge on death of woman

A MAN has been charged with murder after a woman was found dead in Birmingham.

Richard Bailey, of Cooksey Lane, Kingstanding, is accused of killing 33-year-old Charlotte Teeling.

It is alleged the 40-year-old attacked her at his home on Friday. Police said the cause of death had not yet been confirmed. Unemployed Bailey was arrested during the early hours of Saturday.

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Total of five facing charges after death

TWO more men face court after being charged as part of an investigation into the death of a man found stabbed in a Dudley flat.

The body of Jaskaran Kang, 24, from Handsworth, was found at a flat on Stourbridge Road, on January 6.

Joshua Campbell, 18, from King Edmond Street, Dudley, has been charged with murder and conspiracy to commit robbery. Tyrone Johnson, 21, of Malthouse Drive, Dudley, has been charged with conspiracy to commit robbery.

Five people have now been charged in connection with Mr Kang's death.

The development comes after three earlier arrests during the investigation. Reggie Salmon, 20, from Stourbridge Road, Dudley, Danty Ellis, 18, from Central Drive, Lower Gornal, and a 17-year-old boy from Newcastle-Under-Lyme, who cannot be named for legal reasons, have been remanded in custody.

They appeared before Wolverhampton Crown Court on January 17 charged with Mr Kang's murder. Police are continuing to appeal for information and are urging anyone to call 101 giving log number 243 of 6 January. Alternatively Crimestoppers can be called anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Guest ales at brewery's spring beer festival

A BLACK Country brewery is planning a four-day spring beer festival featuring its own brews and guest beers too.

The event will be held at Fixed Wheel Brewery on the Long Lane Trading Estate, Blackheath, and will run from March 29 to April 1.

There will also be live music as part of the festival highlighting the best local ales.

Killer driver fails in bid to get his prison sentence cut

Orchestra plays for women's charity



Alan Blower, John Cartwright, Barry Wheeler, Deborah Slater and Julie Billingham ahead of Halesowen Orchestra's fundraiser

CLASSICAL music from three famous composers will be performed at a fundraiser this month.

Halesowen Orchestra will be playing Felix Mendelssohn's Fingals Cave, Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No 7 and Maria von Weber's Bassoon Concerto.

The concert will take place at Halesowen's Cornbow Hall on March 17, starting at 7.30pm.

The event will raise money for Black

Country Women's Aid, an independent charity which supports survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence in the West Midlands.

Black Country Women's Aid, formerly known as Sandwell Women's Aid, has been running for more than 30 years and has supported more than 8,000 people.

The concert is being held in association with Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary club. A spokesman for

the orchestra, which has been running for more than 30 years, said: "As 2018 is the year of the bassoon, we are delighted to have talented bassoon player Richard Tattam as our soloist."

Halesowen Orchestra, boasts about 40 regular players serving Halesowen and the west of Birmingham.

Tickets for this month's Beethoven's Seventh concert are priced at £10, available at the door or by calling 0121 550 0956.

A 23-year-old motorist whose dangerous driving in the Black Country left a pensioner dead has failed to convince top judges to cut his prison term.

James Mills, aged 23, of School Road, Brierley Hill, was jailed for five years and four months at Wolverhampton Crown Court last June.

He admitted causing the death of Vijaya Mistry, 74, by dangerous driving. Mr Justice Green told London's Appeal Court. Mills was behind the wheel of his Ford Focus, which he had modified to increase its power, on February 3 last year.

He was driving on the 40mph A4036 Pedmore Road, Brierley Hill, when he hit a Ford Mondeo being driven by the victim's husband.

The car went into a spin and front seat passenger Mrs Mistry, who was not wearing a seatbelt, was thrown from the car.

Mills had been racing against a Citroen for 1,000 to 1,500 metres before the collision, said the judge.

Overtaking

He had been overtaking and undertaking other cars and his average speed was estimated at 73mph.

He accepted that he had 'been an idiot' and that he and the other driver had been 'playing around'.

Lawyers for Mills argued that his jail term was far too tough and should be reduced. As for reasons, they pointed to his relative youth, no previous convictions, prompt confession and remorse.

But Mr Justice Green ruled last week that there was nothing manifestly excessive or wrong in principle about Mills' punishment.

Sitting with two other judges, he concluded: "We refuse this application for permission to appeal."

● Stop the Speeders – page 16

'Vulnerable kids' will be hit by cuts

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has criticised the Department of Education over plans to cut funding for young people who have speech, language and communication difficulties.

The contract for Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) at the Communication Trust is set to be cut this year despite Government support for over a decade.

The Labour MP is calling for the decision to be reviewed.

SLCN is one of the most common childhood disabilities – affecting an estimated one in ten youngsters.

Mr Austin said: "I've always said we need to make education and skills our number one priority to give youngsters a first class start in life.

"This decision by the Government could affect some of the most vulnerable kids in the Black Country."

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Low marks for school that drops grading

A SCHOOL in London has decided that giving pupils tangible marks or grades for their work is too stressful, and can affect their mental health.

Instead, teachers at Putney High School will just give general comments about the standard of work. Headmistress Suzie Longstaff says: "Mental health and pupil wellbeing have to be central to everything we do."

Now mental health is a very serious issue, and one which is only belatedly starting to be given the recognition it deserves by the NHS. But I can't help but think that daft ideas such as this trivialise the subject, equating the real suffering of people with serious problems to kids feeling a bit upset by their school report.

It echoes the outcry from teachers when schools minister Nick Gibb recently suggested more tests for young children would be good for their long-term wellbeing. Not an easy argument, but doesn't he have a point? If kids are drilled in exam technique by the ages of seven or eight, surely it should be second nature by the time they reach their O-levels and A-levels? Perhaps what the teachers meant was preparing more kids for exams was not good for their own wellbeing.

Back at Putney High, staff say replacing tangible marks with comments will stop youngsters from competing with each other, and take away "bragging rights". From my memories of school, youngsters who bragged about exam marks got a very swift education in etiquette, but that's another matter.

The problem is, though that the real world is extremely competitive and at times brutal. If schools teach kids not to compete and not to fret about their exams, they are setting them up for a real shock when they leave school.

Because when they find themselves working for a living they will probably find their employers also engage in a bit of comment-based feedback. But probably not the type they will like to hear.

□ □ □

THAT said, I think if I were at school today I would be feeling extremely stressed about World Book Day. Now getting youngsters into reading is an excellent idea, and anything that makes that more fun – particularly for hard-to-reach pupils – is to be supported wholeheartedly.

The problem is, what grown-ups consider fun is not necessarily what children do. And I'm not convinced that ordering kids to dress up as story-book characters is enjoyable. In fact, I can't help but think that for the average schoolkid there can be few things more humiliating than dressing as Charlie Bucket.

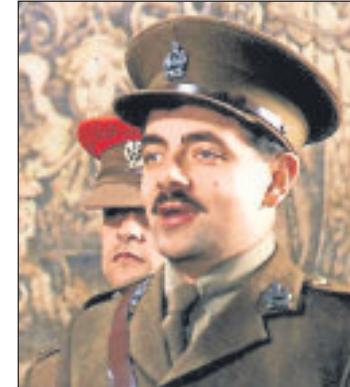
Cosying up to these six nations is really not for us



Diane Abbott – plenty of time to reflect on less ethical migration policies



Emma Chambers – when she suddenly found herself famous, it scared her



Captain Blackadder – as TV fans will know, Mboto Gorge was 'his battle'

Do we really want to go the way of EU?

POETRY among the isobars. I loved one weather forecaster's turn of phrase on a chilly morning this week as the Beast from the East arrived: "A pestering of snow showers." Dylan Thomas would have been proud of that.

WHILE we Brits have been pretending to know the difference between "a customs union" and "the customs union," the European Union has been busy on the other side of the continent, cosying up to six nations which hope to join the Union by 2025. They are: Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. This wild, unstable and religiously riven region used to be called the Powder Keg of Europe. As I have said right from the start of this Brexit business, it is not enough to look at where the UK is going. We should also be looking very carefully at where the European Union is going and ask, do we really want to go that way?

ONE obvious way to halt the sexual objectifying of women in drama is to get more female actors, directors and producers in the system. Or so you might think. In the Beeb's new thriller, Collateral, the star character is a woman, so are two executive producers, and above all so is the director, S J Clarkson. And yet the second episode included a gratuitous nude scene which added nothing to the plot and told us little about the character. It looked like nothing more than a skin-flick moment, designed to attract slavering male viewers. This was not feminism's proudest hour.

I HAD lunch with Emma Chambers back in 1995 just as fame found her. It was a BBC season launch in Birmingham. She had attended the same event the year before and no-one spoke

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



to her or even recognised her. And then at the end of 1994 came the Vicar of Dibley and Alice Tinker became the nation's favourite dimwit. "I hate my face," she told me. "I was convinced I didn't look right at auditions . . . sometimes you do wish you're Kate Moss." When she suddenly found herself famous, it scared her. "I began to start having little panic attacks and finding myself hiding behind the Ambrosia tins in Waitrose. People would point and look. One lady came over and asked if I really was as stupid as I was in Dibley. I told her of course I was." Emma Chambers, who has died terribly early at 53, was delightful company and one of the most modest actors I've ever met.

MORE whimsy in Endeavour (ITV). After last week's episode mentioned the Crossroads Motel, this week's made passing reference to Mboto Gorge, one of the battle honours of the fictitious South Oxfordshire Light Infantry. As Blackadder fans will know, Mboto Gorge was the battle in which Captain Blackadder's troops, armed with rifles and machine guns, massacred a tribe of pygmies armed with fruit.

MASSACRES are always good for gun sales. After every atrocity in the States, local people buy guns to protect themselves. Following the Florida school shootings, there's an even bigger bonanza for the firearms industry. Donald Trump's government is considering issuing guns to selected school teachers. That's another one million guns to be purchased. And if

anyone thinks arming teachers is a good idea, let me relate the tale of an old soldier called Jim who did National Service in Cyprus and found himself caught up in a chase between military police and a wanted terrorist. An MP shoved a revolver into Jim's hands with the instructions: "If he comes out of that door, shoot him." Jim told me that within a few seconds he was so shaky, nauseous and sweaty-handed that he could barely hold the gun, let alone aim it. There is only one place where heroic loners kill the bad guy. The movies.

OUT for a brisk walk in the Beast from the East, I couldn't help noticing that not a single family group we encountered was using mobile phones. Instead, muffled against the Siberian blast, folk were chatting – just like families used to do. All the dazzling technology of tablets and smartphones is no use if you're wearing big thick mittens.

DIANE Abbott, a great believer in free movement of people, says her party will produce "immigration policies that meet the test of being firmly located in Labour's values". This is good news. But then Ms Abbott has had plenty of time to reflect on less ethical migration policies. Back in the 1970s she famously spent a romantic holiday with her boyfriend Jeremy Corbyn in communist East Germany. Why they chose that particular hell-hole (sorry, 'workers' paradise') for a tryst is anyone's guess but she will have seen first-hand a regime where border controls were based on fences and landmines and where anyone trying to flee was shot to death. Freedom of movement, comrades? Only if you can outrun the guard dogs.

TALKING POINT



Those two words that can speak volumes

Just two short words seem to be tripping up so many of us these days. Eight letters which could, as Diana Ross informed us, make this world a better place.

Thank you. That's all it takes. Thank you.

How many times have you held a door open or stepped aside to let someone past, only to be thanked with a muted grunt, nod or even nothing at all?

Yet it takes very little effort to simply thank someone for even the tiniest of gestures.

And it's not just a matter of face-to-face gratitude. When was the last time you wrote to express your appreciation of the service you have experienced in a restaurant, at a sporting event or while on holiday?

I know someone who goes to a summer music festival every year and afterwards without fail writes to the promoter to say how much they have enjoyed the entertainment, much of it performed for free.

Invariably the promoter replies to say that my friend's letter is the first non-business correspondence they have received that year and how much it means to the festival team and the musicians themselves.

Furthermore, some of the most heartfelt letters sent to newspapers are those, often handwritten, from people who have been in hospital and wish to thank the medical staff for their exemplary treatment.

So why do we find it so difficult to come out with those two simple words, particularly in this era of emails and social media?

Perhaps it's because after only a few years of the internet, we take far too much for granted, and instead find it far too easy to complain about, well, just about anything.

But going back to that door-holding scenario, I often imagine an exchange that would ensue if I was not thanked. It goes something like this:

Me - "You're welcome".

Other person - "I beg your pardon?".

Me - "Oh, I'm sorry, I thought you said 'Thank you'."

Other person - "I haven't got a clue what you're talking about".

Me - "Not to worry, have a good day".

Other person - "Weird!".

I ask you, is it worth it? Probably not but if we all kept those two short words to hand, maybe the world might be a less fraught place.

Will you give it a go? Thank you.

STEVE PARLETT

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Beat the crooks – put your car in a garage

UPSETTING to read of people having their cars stolen off their drives and vehicle crime rising by 32 per cent in the last year.

When a car is stolen there is the initial inconvenience followed by the shock of finding out that it is regarded as a 'fault claim' by insurance companies, so putting up your premium.

Then if the car is on a finance agreement the amount paid out may be less than you owe leaving you with no car but having to pay a lump sum unless

To me an obvious thing is to use a garage. If yours has been turned into an extra room fair enough but is it simply full of stuff?

Now might be the time to think about trying to get the second most expensive item you own put away, maybe invest in another shed or even a small extension if it is used as a utility room.

When I have suggested this before

people often claim their car will not fit in a modern garage.

We have always used a garage and, of our neighbours who use theirs – one has a BMW Z4 and another a Jaguar XE, so that rather proves it can be done.

So have a good think. Is it not worth the effort to shift a few hundred pounds worth of stuff to put your pride and joy where it should live? It could even reduce your insurance premium.

RON GWILLIAMS

Brierley Hill

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Dudley Chronicle,
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'Snowflake' politicians are told to toughen up

POLITICS is a rough game. Unfortunately it would seem some of our local politicians aren't tough enough for it.

First, Stourbridge Tory MP Margot James gets very upset and emotional on Question Time when called a liar for trying to claim the Government is increasing spending on the NHS.

Now local Labour leader Peter Lowe wants to censure Ukip's Bill Etheridge for calling the Dudley Labour Group 'Socialist do-gooder bleeding heart Communist rat bags'.

The accuracy of these matters aside, shouldn't our politicians be a little less 'snowflake' when being called names?

NICK BAKER
Amblecote

BRIAN WILLIAMS
Halesowen

Code of Practice:

Our policy is to correct errors as soon as we can. The Chronicles adhere to the Editors' Code of Practice, which can be seen at www.ipso.co.uk. If you are unhappy with the accuracy of a

Pity for those who are not so fortunate

I have just read a letter from Stephen Fellows of Sedgley regarding homelessness in Dudley. He writes: 'Is it not time that the council and police get tough on the homeless people taking over our doorways and move them on from our poor unrecognisable town.' I was reading this whilst the snow continued to fall relentlessly and the temperature plunged to minus 10 degrees. I just have to say to you, Stephen Fellows, that I hope you can live with your conscience. Maybe re-think your attitude and show a little care, respect and pity on those not so fortunate as yourself.

PETER COLE
Kingswinford

Still waiting

COUNCILLOR Patrick Harley, of Dudley Council, said recently that 'contractors have been urged to make some progress in demolishing Cavendish House'. Hasn't Councillor Harley said the same thing several times and nothing has been done.

PETER COLE
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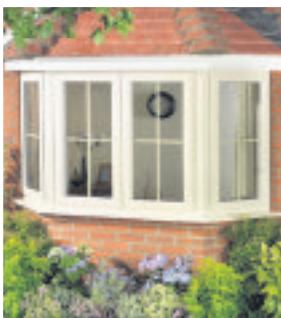


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Is this the face of poor Bella of the Wych Elm?

WHO Put Bella in the Wych Elm? There has been a major development in one of the region's most famous and macabre murder mysteries.

Now the face of the victim can be seen for the first time after it was digitally recreated by a team from Liverpool John Moore's University.

Led by Professor Caroline Wilkinson, a specialist in the craniofacial depiction of people from the past, the team has created a picture of how 'Bella' might have looked before her mysterious death and the finding of her skeletal remains in the hollow of a tree near Hagley.

Her face from the 1940s has been digitally created using pictures of the skull of the victim, which was found by children in the woods during the war years.

Ritual

Speculation has ranged from her being a murdered prostitute, to a German spy or even the victim of a Satanic ritual.

The picture is in a new book by Halesowen author Pete Merrill and his teenaged son Alex called 'Who Put Bella In The Wych Elm?; Volume 1: The Crime Scene Revisited' available via Amazon.

The title comes from the enigmatic graffiti that began appearing across the area, most famously on the Wychbury Obelisk near Hagley, when police were unable to make progress with identifying the victim or finding the killer, or killers.

The Merrills hired Prof Wilkinson and her team after they recreated the image of King Richard III from bones discovered under a Leicester car park.



Bella? Picture: Pete Merrill / APS Books



Famous graffiti on Wychbury Obelisk

Railway museum rethink

ARCHITECTS planning an extension to a popular railway museum are having to go back to the drawing boards.

A £1.5 million extension is being planned for Kidderminster Railway Museum which is currently based in a former Great Western Railway warehouse at the Severn Valley Railway.

Plans had been drawn up for a new building to be sited on land adjacent to the existing building and for

a bridge to link the two properties. Now museum bosses have been offered a decorative Victorian cast iron lattice railway bridge from a station at Marple in Cheshire which they hope to incorporate in the design.

However, it is 34 feet long and, because initial plans were for a 10 to 15 foot long bridge to link the two buildings, plans for the extension and link are having to be redrawn.

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MOLINEUX'S iconic South Bank could become one of the biggest single-tier stands in the country under new Wolves plans.

The club is thought to be considering expanding the Jack Hayward Stand – commonly known as the South Bank – to capacity of up to 10,000 seats.

It is believed they hope to build on the back of the existing stand, which houses around 5,000 fans.

However, the car park area immediately behind the stand is owned by Carillion and it's understood that potentially lengthy negotiations are currently ongoing as to the purchase of the land.

Any redevelopment work is unlikely to take place next season, even if Wolves win promotion to the top flight. It's believed that spending money on the team would be a higher priority with any stadium expansion only taking place should the club stay in the Premier League.

The redevelopment of Molineux has been on hold since 2012 when the team was relegated from the Premier League. The £18 million Stan Cullis Stand opened that year. With Wolves now edging nearer to a return to the top flight, owners Fosun are working on what would be a revamped plan to expand Molineux.

Metro – get on board for breakfast meeting

BUSINESSES are being offered the chance to work on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill tram extension.

A breakfast meeting at the Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill is being held on April 17 at 7.30am. The FindintheBlackCountry team will host the meeting. Spaces for the business breakfast meeting cost £15 plus VAT, call (01384) 563050.

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Conviction quashed due to police failures in custody

Architects helping college students

STOURBRIDGE College has launched its new built environment facility by establishing a partnership with national architectural practice Corstorphine + Wright.

Over the last two years Corstorphine + Wright has provided the college's 60 construction students with industry-related lectures and work placements.

Three of the college's students have gone on to be recruited by the company after completing work experience at its Hagley Road offices in Stourbridge, while continuing their studies and training.

"Teaming up with Corstorphine + Wright puts the college in a stronger position to show our learners the professional working environment they will be joining," said Gill Coldicott, Head of Stourbridge College.

"The industry hasn't stopped calling out for skilled workers. The partnership will help us to continue to develop the construction courses, apprenticeships and training programmes we offer."

Mike Turner, the company's technical director, said: "We already have training and recruitment initiatives in place for graduates and undergraduates and now we are going a step further."

"We hope to inform students about the design and technician roles available on residential, commercial and industrial projects being developed across the UK as well as the region."



Gill Coldicott of Stourbridge College and Mike Turner of Corstorphine + Wright

AN ASPERGER'S sufferer who was refused help by police officers – despite foaming at the mouth and attempting to drink water from the toilet of his custody cell – has won an appeal for his conviction to be quashed.

West Midlands Police broke the Police and Criminal Evidence Act by not providing an 'appropriate adult' for Christopher Miller after his arrest on suspicious of drug-driving, according to a High Court ruling.

Mr Miller, 24, from Great Barr, was kept in a cell at Oldbury Police Station for more than three hours despite police knowing he was a suicide risk, had mental health issues and suffered from Asperger's Syndrome. He requested an appropriate adult, but 'no effort' was made by staff to contact one.

He was later convicted at Dudley Magistrates Court of failing to provide a blood specimen, fined £180 and banned from driving for a year.

The Crown Prosecution Service accepted no appropriate adult was called, but said it was 'justified in the circumstances', with Mr Miller acting erratically and being violent.

Mr Miller's defence said he had reasonable excuse for not providing a specimen because of his failure to understand the procedure, due to his learning difficulties. As this was based on his mental health issues, the High Court ruled the evidence for the charge had to be excluded.

Breach

In a report on the High Court Ruling by Lord Justice Hickinbottom and Mr Justice Dove, it said: "The failure to inform and summon an appropriate adult in breach of the code, in our view, had a clear adverse impact on the fairness of permitting the evidence of the drug-drive procedure to be admitted."

"We quash the conviction on the basis that the prosecution of the appellant on the charge with this appeal is concerned turned entirely upon the evidence now excluded."

West Midlands Police said it expected officers to 'act lawfully and treat everyone with respect.'

Prefab homes on the agenda

PREFABRICATED houses, which were constructed between 1945 and 1951 to help solve Britain's housing shortage after the Second World War, will be the subject of a history talk on Thursday, March 15, in Stourbridge.

Historian and author Ned Williams will be speaking to members of Stourbridge Historical Society in the Wollaston Room at Stourbridge Town Hall.

His illustrated talk will be titled Prefabs: Palaces for the People. The event will start at 7.30pm.

Non-members are welcome to attend the talk, admission £3. More information is available from www.stourbridgehistoricalsociety.com or call (01384) 274014.

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Singer is Miles ahead for a Wonder-ful surprise



Miles Hunt, second left, with Patricia and Kevin Guest and their son Cole. Picture: Durham Region

WONDER Stuff frontman Miles Hunt flew to Canada to surprise a fan at her 50th birthday party.

The Stourbridge rocker jetted out to Brooklyn in Ontario to ensure Patricia Guest had a night to remember.

Her husband, Kevin Guest, a lifelong music aficionado, invited Miles to the private party at the Brooklyn Pub to play an hour-long set last Friday.

Mr Guest reached out through Facebook and inquired about the chances of him taking part in the birthday sur-

prise. He offered to cover the cost of a return flight from London and a four-night stay in Toronto.

It was ideal for the Black Country singer and songwriter who is currently researching a novel he is working on which is set in Canada.

The frontman performed for a crowd of about 50 upstairs at the Brooklyn Pub on Baldwin Street, much to the surprise and delight of Mrs Guest, an estate agent. Mr and Mrs Guest are both fans, the couple having seen The Wonder Stuff in Toronto in 1994 and also saw Miles perform solo in Michigan in 2007.

Journalist Brian McNair who was at the party, grew up with Mr Guest in Toronto and both now live in Brooklyn. "I wasn't convinced this was actually going to happen until Kevin told me his plane had touched down in Toronto," said Mr McNair.

"It turned out to be an incredible night. The music was fantastic, as I expected, but I was surprised at how charming and engaging Miles was when he spoke to us after the show."

The Wonder Stuff and Ned's Atomic Dustbin are launching the Love From Stourbridge tour including two dates at Birmingham O2 Academy.

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FURTHER INVESTMENT IN LOCAL FAMILY COACH HOLIDAY COMPANY

Greenline Coaches pride themselves on being the Black Country's true king of the road.

Based in Stourbridge, the thriving family owned company aims to put the customer first at all times by offering executive coach hire combined with a diverse range of day tours, weekend breaks and four to eight-day holidays throughout the UK. Many of the hotels used by Greenline are also family-owned and run.

Greenline director/owner Andy Phillips is assisted by wife Nikki, brother Simon, niece Amy, and 10 other trusted members of staff to complete a happy and efficient team.

Experience

Andy has many years' experience within the sector having previously worked for a well known Blackheath coach company until their retirement.

Andy said: "After that company ended, I used to see lots of old customers and they'd always comment on how much they missed their day trips and holidays so that inspired me to start our own company.

"I'm delighted to say we get lots of word of mouth recommendations and repeat bookings. Our personal and friendly service combined with our experienced office staff, professional drivers and couriers ensure that our customers' day tours and holidays are always pleasurable and memorable.

"We treat our customers as a name, not a number, and regard them as part of our Greenline family. They receive free drinks,



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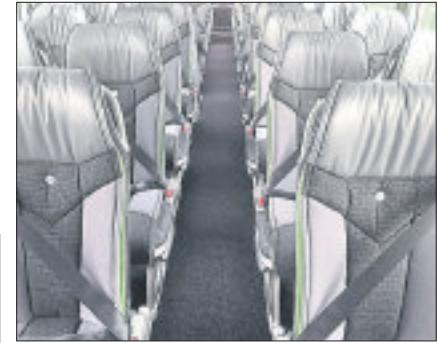
biscuits and treats on all holidays served by our friendly and helpful on-board couriers."

Greenline's smart executive coaches are modern 16 to 53-seater executive models with air suspension, toilets, air conditioning and drink-making facilities. Holidays are being offered throughout the year including tours to

Torquay, Weymouth, Sidmouth, Scotland, Isle of Wight, and Scarborough. The company has invested over £800,000 in its fleet over the last 18 months and took delivery of a 49 seater luxury top of the range Mercedes coach this week to compliment the other vehicles currently in its fleet to help meet demands for

the great Greenline Holidays and day tours they have on offer.

Andy added: "Everyone at Greenline Coaches has a big heart coupled with a huge passion to succeed in what we enjoy doing most in life, which is providing fun, friendship and laughter in the holidays and day trips we provide for our customers. We would like to



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Group returning from one of our many holidays

thank all of our customers for supporting us on our journey over the past eight years and look forward to welcoming them, with new customers, on board in the future."

For the full 2018 programme of day tours and holidays and details of how to book call 01384 444464 or 01384 444161 or visit www.greenlinecoaches.com

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\$79

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Saturday 11th - Saturday 18th August 2018 8 Days

\$379

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\$275

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Monday 3rd - Friday 7th Sept 2018 5 Days

\$359

BABBAcombe - HOTEL DE LA MER

Saturday 8th - Wednesday 12th Sept 2018 5 Days

\$265

SCARBOROUGH - RED LEA HOTEL

Monday 10 - Friday 14th Sept 2018 5 Days

\$79

HAYLING ISLAND - MILL RYTHE HOLIDAY VILLAGE

Monday 10th - Friday 14th Sept 2018 5 Days

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Monday 17th - Friday 21st Sept 2018 5 Days

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Monday 17th - Friday 21st Sept 2018 5 Days

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MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL

Saturday 1st - Sunday 2nd Sept 2018 2 Days

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TORQUAY - NETHWAY HOTEL

Monday 24th - Friday 28th Sept 2018 5 Days

\$439

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Monday 1st - Friday 5th October 2018 5 Days

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MYSTERY WEEKEND - WHERE WILL WE BE? HOTEL

Saturday 6th - Sunday 7th October 2018 2 Days

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SCOTLAND DUNOON - SELBOURNE HOTEL NEW

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14 Mayor keeps his pledge to visit a hundred businesses

THE Mayor of Dudley has completed his mission to visit 100 businesses in his borough.

Councillor Dave Tyler called in at a variety of firms, from butchers and barbers, to manufacturers and car showrooms, since stepping into the role last May.

He has visited 10 businesses a month on average.

The mayor achieved his century with a visit to fast-growing Excel 2000 Windows, on Narrowboat Way in Brierley Hill.

The firm, which replaces old windows and doors, has large contracts in place with Dudley Council and Birmingham City Council among others.

Councillor Tyler said: "I'm really pleased we've been able to get around 100 businesses. I wanted to do it really to thank you for all that they do, for without our businesses in the borough, there would be nothing."

Inspiring

"It's been really inspiring to visit both smaller and larger firms and to hear of some real success stories, with bigger and better things still to come hopefully for most of them. Excel 2000 is a classic example of this, a company which has really taken off in the last 18 months and which I think will continue to grow and grow."

"Through my talks with the companies I've visited, I've also been able to put a few in touch with each other in the hope they'll be able to work together for mutual benefit. Even though we've reached the century, I'll carry on until May when I hand over the chains, and hopefully this will continue beyond my mayoral year."

"We need to champion and work closely with the businesses in our borough."

Stand at Wolves may be set to double in size

MOLINEUX'S iconic South Bank stand could become one of the biggest single-tier stands in the country under initial Wolves stadium redevelopment plans.

Wolves are thought to be considering expanding the Jack Hayward Stand – commonly known as the South Bank – to a capacity of up to 10,000 seats. It's believed they hope to build back on the existing stand, which houses around 5,000 fans.

However the car park area immediately behind the stand is owned by Carillion and it's understood that potentially lengthy negotiations are currently ongoing as to the purchase of the land.

It is thought that any redevelopment work wouldn't take place next season, even if Wolves win promotion to the top flight, as spending money on the team would be a higher priority, with any stadium expansion only taking place should the club stay in the Premier League.

The redevelopment of Molineux has been on hold since 2012 when the team was relegated from the Premier League. The £18 million Stan Cullis Stand opened that year and under £40m proposals spearheaded by previous owner Steve Morgan the Steve Bull and Jack Hayward stands would have been next, both with two tiers.

With Wolves now edging nearer to a return to the top flight, owners Fosun are working on what would be a revamped plan to expand Molineux.

The South Bank in its current guise opened in 1993.

West Bromwich DIY help on way

AN episode of DIY SOS where a family from West Bromwich was helped out will be screening on BBC One next Wednesday, March 14 at 8pm.

Builders, led by presenter Nick Knowles helped to transform the home of the family of Crystal Chambers, a mother who died in October 2015 due to cancer.

A&E patient delays 'not good enough', says chief

Jade's entrance was out of this world

SHE might not have won the contest but Jade Wootton certainly made an entrance at the Miss Black Country final.

Jade, aged 19, rocked up to the event at the Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill, with a Tardis in tow, helping her stand out from the competition.

Aspiring model Jade, from Sedgley, said the police telephone box, straight out of Doctor Who, definitely attracted attention on the night.

Her father Paul bought the Tardis from BBC storage in Lincoln for £300 back in 2013 and it is believed the box was used for filming for episodes of the classic series in the 1980s.

Space

Mr Wootton had to replace the windows, roof and rear side to the box, along with a fresh coat of dark blue paint – all at a cost of £450, not bad for a craft that travels through space and time.

He said: "I first got it for Jade's prom but I've used it



Jade Wootton, 19, arrived in Doctor Who's Tardis at the Miss Black Country final

for all sorts of things since. I took it along when my son Jerome got his degree, we've used it for my 50th birthday and my son's 21st too."

Dental nurse Jade saw

the crown go to Alexandra Darby, of Rowley Regis, who will represent the Black Country in the Miss England finals. But she did

award. Jade was selected out of 300 other Black Country girls to reach the top 13, and said she will now be working towards her ambition of becoming a model.

THE BOSS of the trust that runs Sandwell Hospital admits delays in emergency care are 'unacceptable'.

It comes as dozens of operations were cancelled and thousands of patients kept waiting for hours in A&E. The trust that runs the hospital missed targets for both A&E waiting times and cancelled operations in January – with chief executive Toby Lewis admitting performance was not good enough.

A total of 37 operations were cancelled during the month as the trust struggled with a lack of beds due to intense winter pressures.

Meanwhile only 82.5 per cent of A&E patients were seen within four hours – way below the national NHS target of 95 per cent.

The trust that runs Sandwell Hospital had set itself the goal of having 95 per cent of A&E patients seen within four hours by March. It has not met the national standard for more than two years, and looks almost certain to fall short of meeting the target this month.

Meanwhile 3,249 patients were kept waiting in A&E longer than four hours in January.

The number of cancelled operations was put down to the lack of beds at the trust's two hospitals, Sandwell General and City Hospital. A total of 17 were cancelled due to 'increased emergency demand', trust board papers showed.

Three operations were cancelled for a second time due to 'lack of beds secondary to exceptional urgent care demand'. In a report to board members, Mr Lewis said: "The unacceptable delays for emergency care continue."

Pressure on grieving staff to go back

NEW research from Co-op Funeralcare found that 42 per cent of adults in the West Midlands felt pressured to return to work after a loss.

A survey of bereaved people found 23 per cent feel they needed more than two weeks off before they were truly ready to come back.

Also with 37 per cent of grieving adults in the region feeling others actively avoided them, 25 per cent said they felt isolated at work after suffering the loss of a loved one.

As well as tackling feelings of loneliness and isolation, adults in the West Midlands are also left worrying how their grief is being perceived by those around them. When dealing with the loss of a loved one who is not an immediate family member, 16 per cent felt they had to justify their level of grief.

Icy blast from Siberia causes disruption across region



Youngsters enjoying the snow in Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge



Icicles in a Coseley canal tunnel



Slip sliding buses struggle to get uphill due to snow in Gornal



The statue of poet Ben Boucher is a lonely figure in frozen Dudley town centre



A deserted Black Country Living Museum



Ducks and swans on the icy lake at Dartmouth Park, West Bromwich

Thaw-some, as big freeze melts

HAVING survived the Beast from the East and Storm Emma, the big thaw hit the Black Country this week.

So blizzards have been followed by a risk of flooding from melt water swollen waterways and burst pipes.

Hopefully we can put the snow shovels back in the shed as we look forward to more typical early spring weather.

On Monday a spokesman for the Environment Agency said: "We are monitoring conditions and are ready to support local authorities as they respond to surface-water flooding. Check if you're at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea and get the latest guidance by calling 0345 988 1188 or visiting www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk."

Schools were closed on Friday and there was widespread disruption to the transport system. Major attractions, including Dudley Zoo and

the Black Country Living Museum, had to close during the worst of the weather.

Wolves' clash with Reading at Molineux and Villa's home meeting with QPR will now be rearranged after both were called off in the interests of public safety. Staff and volunteers worked through the night in a bid to save the game at Molineux, which was scheduled to be broadcast live on Sky Sports.

Villa's home game with QPR has been rearranged for March 13 after

heavy snowfall on Friday night. It is the first time a Villa home game has been called off due to weather conditions since December 2000. Villa made a positive from the postponement by donating more than 700 packed lunches to homeless charities.

Meanwhile, there was controversy at the Genting Arena when the Steeplechangers concert went ahead on Thursday night but Paul Weller's concert was called off at short notice on Friday and then Elbow's gig went ahead on Saturday.

Some theatre shows were cancelled, though comedian Dara O'Briain was able to perform all but one of these three shows at Birmingham Hippodrome and Hairspray went ahead at Wolverhampton Grand.

During the cold spell volunteers did their bit for NHS staff by ploughing through blistering winds to drive them to work. Hospital bosses praised the efforts of 4x4 drivers who responded to appeals to help get essential medical staff to work.

New transport app going live in region

A MULTI-MILLION pound scheme aimed at transforming the way people travel will get its UK launch in the West Midlands next month.

The region has been chosen to pilot the Whim travel app, which enables commuters to use a combination of different types of public transport and taxis for a set price.

The scheme will also include the rental of 'Boris Bikes' – 5,000 of the loan cycles are set to hit the region's streets this year.

It is the idea of Finnish firm Mobility as a Service (MaaS) Global and works by combining reservation and payment services to find the best routes and modes of transport for any journey.

Whim has been launched in collaboration with the West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport for West Midlands, National Express and other transport firms.

Chris Perry, MaaS Global's UK lead, said the scheme would offer a range of transport options while taking away the hassle of journey planning and buying tickets, with the added benefit of getting people out of their cars.

"We think this will revolutionise the way people buy and use all forms of transport," he said.

See whimapp.com/uk for details.

Summerfest bill is topped by Lemar



Soul singer Lemar headlines Summerfest for the hospice

R&B and pop stars Lemar, Matt Terry and Reggie 'n' Bollie have been announced for Mary Stevens Hospice's Summerfest at Himley Hall. The fundraising event, hosted by Signal 107, is take place on July 15.

Lemar is an English singer, songwriter and record producer. He rose to fame after finishing in third place on the first series of *Fame Academy*. He has won two Brit Awards and three MOBO Awards to date and released his sixth album, *The Letter*, in 2015.

The soul singer from London has had seven top 10 UK singles and sold more than two million albums, and is best known for singles such as *It's Not That Easy*, *Time to Grow*, *If There's Any Justice*, *If She Knew*, *The Way Love Goes* and *Weight of the World*.

British singer Matt Terry won the 13th series of *The X Factor* in 2016 and is best known for his debut single, *When Christmas Comes Around*. He released his debut album *Trouble* last year.

Reggie 'n' Bollie, formerly known as Menn on Poinnt, are a Ghanian music duo made up of Reggie Zippy and Bollie Babeface. The act formed in 2012 and appeared on the 12th series of *The X Factor* in 2015, finishing as runners-up.

The event also include a food festival and car show. Early-bird tickets costing £15 are available until May 6. Go to marystevenshospice.co.uk/event/summerfest-2018 online.

Party surprise at next movie matinee

NEW comedy film *The Party* will be shown at a regular cinema matinee next month.

It stars Kristin Scott Thomas as Janet who has just been appointed to a key ministerial position. She and husband Bill (Timothy Spall) celebrate with a party. But as the guests arrive there are some explosive revelations. The movie also features Emily Mortimer and, from *Peaky Blinders*, Cillian Murphy. The film will be shown at Stourbridge Town Hall on March 19 at 1.30pm. Tickets cost £4.50.

Surgical instrument was left in patient after Russells Hall op

A MAN had a surgical instrument left inside him following an operation at Russells Hall Hospital.

The item, believed to be a 10-inch 'retractor', was discovered inside the patient after he returned to the hospital in Dudley complaining of severe abdominal pain. Health bosses are investigating the incident.

The patient is being kept 'fully informed' during the investigation, said a spokesman for the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, which runs the hospital.

A source, who asked not to be named, claimed the instrument concerned was a 10-inch retractor, which is used in surgical incisions.

The man returned around two weeks ago with severe abdominal pain

and, after undergoing another operation, the instrument was found.

The chief executive of the trust, Diane Wake, said: "We can confirm that we are investigating an incident involving a retained object following a surgical procedure, and the patient concerned is being kept fully informed. We will not comment further without the patient's express permission."

Play within a play for a 'whodunnit' thriller

WHEN an actress is found dead from an apparent suicide after the opening night of her West End stage debut, the playwright is left heartbroken and on the first anniversary of her death, he gathers the cast and crew from that ill-fated night in the same theatre.

Stourbridge Theatre Company returns to the stage with the murder mystery *Rehearsal For Murder*. It is being staged at Stourbridge Town Hall from March 22 to 24 at 7.30pm, directed by Sandra Griswold.

Tickets cost £10 (concessions £8) and are available on 0333 666 3366 or from The French Deli in Coventry Street. They can also be obtained online at stourbridge-theatre.co.uk.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

City firm ranked in workplace top 10

WOLVERHAMPTON-BASED Charter Court Financial Services has been ranked as one of the top 10 employers for the third year in a row in the Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For list.

Charter Court, based at Broadlands, has grown since its launch in 2008 to employ more than 500 people.

Scores and ratings across a wide range of factors including leadership and fairness are based on the views of employees, and each year the questionnaires are revised and updated to reflect current concerns across UK workplaces to provide a detailed picture of working at a particular firm.

Unhappy staff fuel job queries boost

APPLICATION rates for office professional posts soared by 83.7 per cent across Birmingham in January according to independent jobs website CV-Library.

Lee Biggins, founder of CV-Library, said: "Candidates are storming the job market like never before. As such, it's important that businesses in Birmingham are offering the full package."

The survey of 1,200 workers revealed half (50.3 per cent) of professionals in Birmingham are unhappy in their current roles. This job dissatisfaction could be one of the driving factors behind the hike in application rates.

Interim principal starts at college

A COLLEGE has appointed a new interim principal.

Wolverhampton College has appointed Malcolm Cowgill after the departure of Claire Boliver, who has left the college after five years to become principal and chief executive at South Staffordshire College.

Her replacement in Wolverhampton Mr Cowgill is a teacher with 25 years' experience in the further education sector in East Anglia and the East Midlands.

Building society to take old tenners

DUDDY Building Society will continue to accept old £10 notes over the coming weeks. Legal tender status for the paper £10 notes ended on March 1. New polymer £10 note has been in circulation since September.

The society, with branches in Brierley Hill, Lower Gornal, Kingswinford, Perton and Dudley town centre, is encouraging everyone to check behind their sofas and in their piggy banks for any old notes. The society will continue to accept them from people whether they are a member of the society or not. The society's Raj Bains said: "The deadline seems to have crept up on a number of people."

Last of the Chairmen headlines soul concert

KEN Knox, the only surviving member of American 1970s soul group Chairmen of the Board, is performing at Dudley Town Hall on April 28. He will be supported by The Signatures.

The Dudley concert is part of a six-date tour of the UK. Knox will be performing Chairmen of the Board hits including Give Me Just A Little More Time. Tickets for the Dudley gig cost £18.50. See www.boroughhalls.co.uk

Fewer drivers are caught using phones

THE number of drivers issued with fixed penalty notices for using a hand held mobile phone at the wheel has dropped by more than 40 per cent since penalties doubled.

A Freedom of Information request revealed the number of FPNs issued for the offence fell from 87,051 in 2016 to 51,787 last year. Studies carried out by the AA suggest that the drop is due to road safety campaigns and the doubling of the fine and points.

Black Country victims inspire campaign

WALSALL North MP Eddie Hughes has called for a new charge to be created - 'failing to stop following a fatal or serious injury crash' - after this was raised road safety charity Brake.

He said it was needed because 'at present, British law acts as an incentive for the worst law-breaking drivers to flee a crash if they kill someone'.

Mr Hughes called on the Government to 'listen to the thousands of

people who have already backed the campaign by the Express & Star and listen to the call of Brake to create a new offence'.

"Let's work together to ensure that fewer families have to grieve the loss of loved ones - let's stop the speeders."

Among those killed by dangerous drivers were Georgie Evans, a former pupil of Kinver High School, who died

when her car was hit by an Audi A6 driven by Kuba Oles. He was speeding along Priory Road in Dudley when it happened, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. The 24-year-old, of Beaconsfield Road in West Bromwich, was later jailed for six years after he pleaded guilty to causing death by dangerous driving.

Student Rebecca McManus, 21, was waiting at a bus stop when Sukhinder

Mannan, who was racing at 101mph, hit and killed her. The crash in Hagley Road West in Bearwood saw 34-year-old Mannan, from Halesowen, being jailed for eight years after admitting causing death by dangerous driving.

A petition can be signed at www.change.org/p/theresa-may-mp-killer-drivers-should-have-stiffer-sentences website. More than 2,000 have already signed.

Designing skills could bag school a £500 win

ARE you a primary school in the Black Country or Staffordshire? Then your artistic talents are needed.

After 15 successful years our sister daily the Express & Star has again launched its popular Design an Ad competition. Register now and your school could win £500.

Every school taking part will be teamed up with a local business who advertises in the Express & Star and pupils will be tasked with creating an original advertisement for their designated company. Each company will pick its favourite design, which will then feature in an eight-page colour supplement in the paper.

Vote

From this shortlist, readers will vote for their favourite, and every pupil whose design is featured in the supplement will be invited to a special presentation ceremony at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre where they will be given a certificate and meet the other winners and their sponsors.

Every participating school will receive a £50 achievement award, plus the chance to win £500 if their advert is judged the winner. Last year almost 1,000 children from across the region put crayon to paper and created some superb designs.

Places are limited and time is running out so register now. The deadline is Saturday (10). For details call 01902 319439. To register go to [https://www.expressandstar.com/news/education/2018/02/13/design-an-ad-register-your-school-for-the-chance-to-win-500/](http://www.expressandstar.com/news/education/2018/02/13/design-an-ad-register-your-school-for-the-chance-to-win-500/)

Apprentice fair is hosted by MP

AN MP will be holding a fair to coincide with National Apprenticeship Week.

Stourbridge MP Margot James will host the Apprenticeship Fair alongside Stourbridge Jobcentre tomorrow (Friday) at the Glasshouse College in Stourbridge. This event will coincide with National Apprenticeship Week, which takes place from March 5 to 9.

This event is part of Margot's Aspirations programme, which gives local young people the chance to participate in a series of workshops and networking fairs, designed to help them to realise and fulfil their potential.

The event will take place from 5pm to 6:30pm at Glasshouse College.

Attendees will be able to network with a number of businesses and organisations.

Minister says tougher sentences on the way

Report by David Cosgrove

A GOVERNMENT minister has hailed the Express & Star's Stop the Speeders campaign in Parliament - and promised tougher sentences for killer drivers will be brought in.

Rory Stewart made the vow during a debate sparked by Walsall North MP Eddie Hughes' who was backed the campaign by The Chronicle's sister newspaper urging the Government to bring in tougher penalties for killer drivers.

The MoJ wants to extend the maximum penalty for death by dangerous driving from 14 years in prison to a life sentence.

Mr Stewart confirmed the Government is 'working to find a time in the legislative agenda' to bring in life sentences for killer drivers.

He said: "I would like to pay tribute to the honourable member for Walsall North for bringing this debate to the House and also to the Express & Star and local Labour councillor Doug James who have done an enormous amount of work on this issue.

"We as a Government have committed to increasing the penalty for death by dangerous driving to a life sentence.

Agenda

"We are now working to find a time in the legislative agenda to bring that in - this needs to happen because families at the moment feel that the system is not just."

During the 30-minute debate in Westminster Hall, Mr Hughes hailed the Stop the Speeders campaign and said: "The time has come for change and the Government must now make time available to implement this change."

The campaign follows several tragic incidents in the Black Country (see panel above).



Walsall North MP Eddie Hughes wants a new charge created as part of tougher sentencing on speeders



Georgie Evans died when her car was hit by a speeder



Student Rebecca McManus was killed at a bus stop

PM hopeful over 'super hospital'

PRIME Minister Theresa May has said the Government is striving to ensure work can restart on a £350 million hospital after it was hit by the collapse of Carillion.

Work ground to a halt on the Midland Metropolitan Hospital in Smethwick after the Wolverhampton-based building giant went bust.

The hospital, which is around two-thirds built, was originally due to open in autumn 2018 but chiefs have now admitted it could now be delayed beyond 2020.

Mrs May said she was hopeful work could 're-commence as soon as possible'.

She was asked by Warley MP John Spellar in the Commons to commit to ensuring work would get back under way on the hospital. She said: "I understand more than 8,000 Carillion workers have had their jobs safeguarded but, of course, that is no comfort to those made redundant and their families."

"The right honourable gentleman raises a specific point about the Midland

Metropolitan Hospital. The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Improvement are working with the trust and the private finance initiative company so that work can re-commence as soon as possible."

Her comments were welcomed by the chief executive of the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, Toby Lewis, who said the aim was for work to restart in two months time. Mr Lewis said on Twitter: "Good to see cross-party support today for finishing Midland Met Hospital at Prime Minister's Questions. Back on site building this May if we can."

The 'super hospital', which is due to become Sandwell's main hospital, had already hit a series of delays before the collapse of Wolverhampton-based Carillion plunged the project into crisis.

Answers on construction timescales are particularly pressing as there are concerns that continuing to run Sandwell General and City Hospitals with current staffing levels is 'unsustainable' in the long term.

Sex attacker is jailed for assault in park

A SEX offender whose attack on a terrified runner was foiled by passing cyclists has been jailed for three years.

Shane Codd chased his victim as she jogged in Sandwell Valley Park, knocking her to the ground, pulling her hair and putting his hand inside her clothing.

She was so traumatised by the assault that she has since left her home town of West Bromwich to live in a different area, Mr Simon Foster, prosecuting, told Wolverhampton Crown Court.

The judge commended the actions of three cyclists who came to the woman's rescue and helped to restrain this 51-year-old Codd.

She told police: "He looked like he had pure hatred in his eyes."

Her assailant tried to pull her into bushes but she screamed and kicked out as Codd began a sexual assault. She broke free but he caught her again.

The woman jogged past Codd on June 18 and smiled at him as he stepped aside to let her by. Seconds later she heard an 'Oy!' and turned to see that he was exposing himself. He made a lewd suggestion.

She ran on, hoping he was just a 'flasher', as she later told police, but felt unnerved.

Eyes

The next minute she heard footsteps behind her and was flung to the ground by Codd, who grabbed her arm and pulled her hair.

She told police: "He looked like he had pure hatred in his eyes."

Her assailant tried to pull her into bushes but she screamed and kicked out as Codd began a sexual assault. She broke free but he caught her again.

The five-minute assault only

ended when her screams were heard by the cyclists, who sped to her aid.

Codd claimed he had run after the woman to ask her for a date and that she had punched him.

Mr Chris O'Gorman, defending, told the court that Codd had learning difficulties, had suffered 'what amounted to a breakdown' following his mother's death and was coping with depression.

He said Codd had taken the runner's smile as 'an invitation'.

Codd, of City Road, Tividale, pleaded guilty to exposure and sexual assault.

Judge Dean Kershaw jailed him for three years and the defendant was also put on the sex offenders list indefinitely.

Region's new £7m air ambulance takes off



Critical care paramedics Fay Pollock, of Sutton Coldfield, and Kerry Hemus, of Wolverhampton, at the unveiling

A NEW upgraded £7 million air ambulance helicopter for the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity has been launched.

Registered with the call sign 'G-RMAA', the Airbus helicopter was officially unveiled last week by the charity's chairman, Brendan Connor, with ambassadors actor John Challis, Paralympic equestrian Sir Lee Pearson CBE and rugby player Neil Back MBE at the RAF Cosford Museum.

The larger H145 air ambulance helicopter will undertake an average of three missions every day.

It will provide a number of benefits

to patient care within the Midlands – as well as travelling greater distances without the need for refuelling and will enable the aircrew to respond even faster due to increased speed capability.

The larger interior means additional aircrew can be flown to major incident scenes, and further medical equipment can be carried on board to treat more complex emergencies.

Only Fools and Horses star John Challis said: "For me, it is a great privilege to help unveil this new helicopter. I have been collecting for the charity at my shows and people are so generous – they have really taken the

charity to their hearts. They are very brave and dedicated people at the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity."

Lee Pearson CBE, 11-times Paralympic games gold medallist having represented British para-equestrianism, said: "A lot sport accidents take place in the middle of nowhere – equestrian riders have used the service this charity provide, myself included. This new piece of kit will help by saving many lives."

Former England Rugby star Neil Back MBE said: "What this helicopter will provide is speed and time – and that is crucial for the difference between life and death."

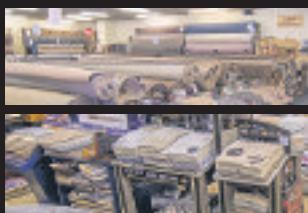
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Live Knightmare scenario

AT its peak cult children's TV show Knightmare pulled in more than six million viewers – and fans of the series will be taking a special Black Country trip down memory lane this week.

The critically acclaimed stage adaptation of the late 1980s and early 1990s cult classic, Knightmare Live, is coming to Brierley Hill Civic Hall tonight (Thursday). Hundreds of fans have already snapped up tickets.

The concept of the TV show was simple. Teams of four children would attempt to beat all the devilish traps of a virtual reality dungeon. Goblins, giant spiders, and talking walls were just some of the obstacles that needed to be overcome along the way.

One of the four would be the dungeoneer, blinded by wearing the infamous helmet of justice. He or she would be guided by the other three, of course with the help of dungeon master Treguard, played by Hugo Myatt.

The idea to create a live version of the show came nearly 20 years after its run on television screens ended.

Paul Flannery, who created the show and also plays Treguard in the live version, said: "Like most of life's good ideas, I was in a pub when Knightmare Live drew first breath."

"It came about as a result of a simple conversation about what would make a good Edinburgh show. Funhouse, The Crystal Maze and Art Attack were all mooted before Knightmare. After that night, I just couldn't get the idea out of my head."

Patronise

"I could see Knightmare working, the mechanics lent themselves to the stage far better than any of the others."

"I'd always been a fan of Knightmare since I was a kid. The thing that sticks out for me and what I think contributed to its success, is that it didn't patronise the contestants. If you made a mistake, you died and that was it, bye bye."

"A lot of other kids shows seemed to give away huge prizes for very little effort. Even if you did win Knightmare – which only eight teams ever did in eight seasons – the prize was a simple trophy."

Paul and his team took the show to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival for the first time in 2013 – and the response was incredible. The show sold out for the whole run and received a clutch of four and five-star reviews.

It has continued to receive critical acclaim ever since, with annual Edinburgh runs and the show also becoming a regular part of the Underbelly Festival on the Southbank of London. "During a show at the End of the Road Festival, the organisers had to stop people coming into the forest glade stage area," Paul said. "About 1,500 people had decided to miss the end of the Flaming Lips and see our little show."

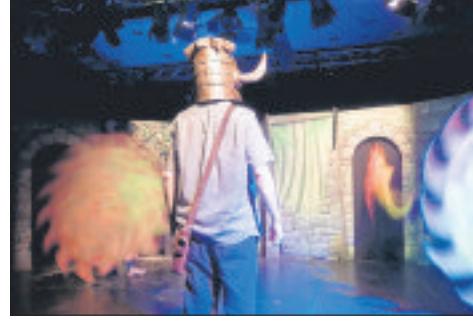
"About three-quarters of the way through we were asked to



Lord Fear and live show Treguard, alias Paul Flannery



A scene from the original TV series of Knightmare



Obstacles faced by the Knightmare contestants



Original Treguard Hugo Myatt and creator Paul Flannery

keep it down as the neighbours from a mile away had complained about the noise, basically people laughing. I can think of no higher praise."

The show also became award-winning last year, landing the prestigious 'Best Live Event' gong at gaming convention UK LARP.

So what can people expect from the show at Brierley Hill?

"The show's current format is far more improvised than it has been in the past," Paul said. "In Brierley Hill you can ex-

pect to be asked to name the quest the dungeoneer is going on. We'll be taking quest items from the audience at the start too, these are unusual items people have brought with them to 'help' with the quest."

"Also a few lucky people will get to wear the iconic helmet of Justice and partake in the quest."

Tickets for Knightmare Live cost £10. Children are welcome, although parents are warned there may be some mild swearing due to the improvised nature of the show.

New York gangs fight turf war in West Side Story

GROUND-BREAKING musical West Side Story is being performed in Stourbridge this week.

Inspired by Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, the original Broadway production opened in 1957, featuring music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim. This show marked the latter's Broadway debut.

A 1961 movie of the musical followed, with a host of Tony and Academy Award nominations, bringing the raw reality of gang life on the streets of New York to world.

Depicting the struggle between rival gangs, The Jets and The Sharks, West Side Story is essentially a tale of love, where an all-American boy, Tony, falls for Puerto Rican girl Maria, the sister of Sharks leader Bernardo. Amid racial prejudice and cultural differences, how can their love survive?

The unforgettable score includes One Hand, One Heart, Somewhere, I Feel Pretty, America, Tonight and Maria.

It is rarely performed by amateurs, but one group who have been brave enough to take it on is TAB Operatic Society. The run kicked off last night (Wednesday) and it is on until Saturday at Stourbridge Town Hall, with showtimes at 7.30pm and a Saturday matinee at 2.30.

In TAB's production, Mitchell Bastable appears as Bernardo, with Dan Smith as Tony, Beth Berwick-Lowe as Maria and Grant Chapman as Riff.

Tickets are £17-£13. Call 07722417962 or visit www.taboperatic.com

Ale festival help call

MORE volunteers are needed to help with the annual Stourbridge Beer Festival next month.

The Stourbridge and Halesowen branch of the Campaign for Real Ale is staging the event in the town hall from April 25 to 28 with more than 100 beers to feature.

Help is needed with manning the bars and setting up and taking down. Sign up at stourbridgebeerfest.org.uk

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20 Event set to help career ambitions at council HQ

HUNDREDS of jobs and apprenticeships are up for grabs at a Sandwell Council event tomorrow, Friday.

Anyone looking for a job, interested in an apprenticeship or up for a career change is invited to go along to the Careers in Sandwell event at the council house in Oldbury.

Posts up for grabs include apprenticeships with the council in a range of roles – plus the council is recruiting around 50 full-time, permanent home support assistants. The event is the culmination of National Apprenticeship Week 2018.

Experts will be on-hand to offer practical advice on applying for apprenticeships and jobs, help with finding training and specialist support for people with disabilities looking for work. Visitors can also chat with council apprentices who will be able to talk about their experiences.

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for regeneration, Councillor Paul Moore said: "Over the past five years we've helped more than 1,000 people to find an apprenticeship or a job with the council or a local company and we're hoping this event will help us even more."

The event, which is in the council chambers of the main council building on Freeth Street, runs from 2pm until 6pm. No appointment is necessary and the event is open to people of any age.

Preferred school choice is missed

MORE than one in four parents in Sandwell missed out on the preferred secondary school for their children.

Just 73 per cent of parents were successful in getting their top school. More than 10 per cent missed out on their top three preferences, with 89 per cent successful. Education chiefs said more than 4,000 children have secured a place in their parents' preferred secondary school in Sandwell.

Children's services chief, Councillor Simon Hackett, said: "It's good news that we continue to offer such a high percentage of parents their preferred choices. We've worked hard on making sure we meet demand for school places and have proposals for brand new schools to open in the coming years."

Homes lose power

NEARLY two dozen homes in Oldbury were affected when a power cut hit. More than 20 properties in Highbury Road, Thompson Road and Suffolk Close were hit by the problem at about 11.30am last Thursday.

On your barks! Get set for Crufts show



DOG owners and their prized pooches have been getting ready this week, to go walkies down to the National Exhibition Centre for Crufts 2018. The big show – where every dog has its day – kicks off today, Thursday, and runs until Sunday with thousands of people to descend on the venue near Birmingham. And it will be non-stop action with no time to 'paws' as dogs take part in a range of categories, from agility, to freestyle heelwork, flyball and more. There will also be a variety of displays and stalls for visitors to browse across the four days. Watch the Crufts 2018 trailer and see a full schedule at The Chronicle's sister paper The Express & Star's website at expressandstar.com

Green light for next stage of Paradise



An artist's impression of the scheme

COUNCILLORS have given the green light to a 13-storey landmark office building as the next phase of development at Paradise Birmingham.

Another office building and a 250-bedroom hotel will also form part of the next stage of work on the £700 million transformation of the city centre. City councillors have given planning permission for the 280,000 sq ft One Centenary Way building which will overlook a transformed Centenary Square.

Meanwhile construction firm BAM has just started work on Two

Chamberlain Square while work is continuing on improvements to the public space in Chamberlain Square. Work on the nearly completed One Chamberlain Square building – to be the new regional headquarters of accountants PwC – is currently suspended after the collapse of builder Carillion.

Work on the newest building is expected to start later this year.

Designed by Birmingham-based Glenn Howells Architects, One Centenary Way incorporates three-metre wide horizontal windows, encased

within an exposed darker structural steel facade. The building will overlook the redesigned Centenary Square and will open out onto Centenary Way, linking Victoria, Chamberlain and Centenary Squares, offering large office floorplates of 22,500 sq ft and space for shops and restaurants at ground level.

One Centenary Way will be the first building developed as part of Phase Two of Paradise Birmingham. This next phase will also deliver a further office building, Three Chamberlain Square, along with four-star hotel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Caitlin Moran to give fame tips

WOLVERHAMPTON author and columnist Caitlin Moran will take to the stage in Birmingham in a brand new show this summer.

The Raised By Wolves writer will be at the city's Town Hall to discuss her latest novel How To Be Famous – a sequel to the Sunday Times number one best-seller How To Build A Girl.

Caitlin says she will be "talking about who the best famous people are and how to deal with it when they're 'problematic'; the video to Charlie XCX's Boys; why the stone Rihanna keeps gaining and losing is awesome and normal; why 'bad boys' have had their day and more".

A copy of the new book will be included with every ticket bought for the show. The talk will take place on June 28. Tickets are priced between £28 and £33, visit www.thsh.co.uk/

Join DJ Sara Cox for 1980s event

RADIO and TV star Sara Cox is set to present an 1980s-themed party in Birmingham. The Bolton broadcast, best known for her time presenting the Radio One Breakfast Show, currently hosts Sounds of the 80s on BBC Radio Two.

Sara began her career when she appeared in the music video for Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark's 1993 single Everyday and on a controversial promotional poster for the 1995 video game Wipeout. Her first TV show was in 1996, when she presented The Girly Show on Channel 4.

Sara Cox's 80s Night is at Birmingham's O2 Institute on May 19.

Nursery fun day for music funds

A BLACK Country nursery is holding an Easter fun day to raise money for its children.

Bright Lights Day Care in Smethwick is working with businesses in the town to raise money to fund music sessions for its children.

The nursery, which says it has lots of children who speak English as an additional language and some children who need speech and language therapy, say music sessions act as a 'fantastic' support for the youngsters.

The fun day, which takes place on March 29, will feature both free and paid for activities.

Moon on rise at Hare and Hounds

LOS Angeles trio Lo Moon are set to play at the Hare & Hounds in Birmingham to coincide with the release their self-titled debut record.

Released on Columbia Records, it features guest turns by The War On Drugs' Adam Granduciel and Charlie Hall, who they supported on tour last year. Those who missed them in Birmingham in the autumn supporting London Grammar can catch them at the Kings Heath venue on May 24.

Relatives of man who died sought

THE Black Country coroner's office is appealing for help in tracing the relatives of man who died last week at Sandwell General Hospital aged 45.

Royston John Davies, who was born on October 14, 1972, lived at Princip Street, Birmingham. He passed away at the hospital on February 20. Anyone who can help in contacting Mr Davies' next of kin is asked to call Rachel on 0121 5697200.

Elvis to enter the building, at Dudley

ELVIS fans will be treated to some of the King's biggest hits during a concert later this month.

Singer Richard Griffin is bringing The Elvis Presley Songbook to Dudley Town Hall on March 29. To book tickets, which cost £7, call 01384 812812 or go online to boroughhalls.co.uk.



Brendon Batson with his bike

Baggies' Brendon enters 75km race

BAGGIES legend Brendon Batson is gearing up for a 75km cycle challenge to raise funds for a charity close to his heart.

The 65-year-old, who played for West Bromwich Albion from 1978 to 1982, will be taking on Ride the Reservoir in aid of Birmingham St Mary's Hospice.

Taking place on March 18, the fundraiser starts at Bartley Green before extending into the scenic villages of Romsley, Belbroughton, Chaddesley Corbett, Barn Green and then back to the reservoir.

Brendon, who will be joined by hundreds of other keen cyclists, is showing his support for the hospice that cared for his late wife, Cecily, who died from a brain tumour, aged 57, in 2009.

He said: "The care Cecily and my family received was just incredible. It was a massive comfort she was cared for at home and I'll never forget the kindness and dignity the nurses and doctors showed us. Taking on Ride the Reservoir is my way of continuing to say thank you to the hospice."

Registration for the ride costs £20 online at birminghamhospice.org.uk/Event/rrt2018



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**THE KITE RUNNER
IS FLYING HIGH**

INSIDE

MUSIC + THEATRE + TV GUIDE + PUZZLES



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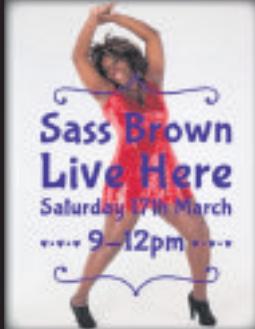
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Beautiful moments of humour and joy

It's been called 'a spellbinding production'. And the contemporary cultural phenomenon that is The Kite Runner will make its debut at Birmingham's REP from Tuesday to March 24.

The performances follow an outstanding West End for the show, which is based on Khaled Hosseini's international bestselling novel.

Audiences can look forward to a haunting tale of friendship which spans cultures and continents and follows one man's journey to confront his past and find redemption.

The action centres on Afghanistan, a divided country on the verge of war and in which two childhood friends are about to be torn apart.

The scene is set on a beautiful afternoon in Kabul when the skies are full of the excitement and joy of a kite-flying tournament. But neither Hassan nor Amir can foresee the terrible incident which will shatter their lives forever.

The production features an impressive cast, including Ravi Aujla, Jo Ben Ayed, Raj Ghatak, Amiera Darwish and Rez Kabir.

Rez plays Mary in the story of youth, transgression and redemption.

She believes audiences will go away having learned much.

"Younger audiences will take something from it, an older generation will pick up on something else, but the great appeal of this play is the beautiful moments of joy and humour that exist in life. Everyone will be able to connect."

The play is brought to life by music created by musical director and composer Jonathan Girling.

He says: "Putting on a play always involves collaboration. The most important person is the director, who puts the team together, makes all the final decisions, and is the driving force behind the production.

"The rest of the creative team is made up of the writer, the set-designer, lighting designer, composer, movement director, sound designer, fight director and that's just the tip of the iceberg. There's a huge team of people that have made The Kite Runner happen.

As the composer, the script and director are always my primary points of reference when thinking about the music. What does the script say to me (what sounds, tunes, emotions, textures or colours does it make me imagine?), and then what does the director want to do with the play?

"Once I've spent some time with the director and script, I'll start working on ideas, listing key scenes and moments in the drama. These initial ideas – normally written notes on traditional manuscript, or an instrument or two – are then introduced into the rehearsal room, and that's where the real magic starts to happen."

Jonathan says with the first version of the show, The Kite Runner had a great singer whose voice inspired him to think about writing songs to underpin some key emotional scenes. After he'd written the songs, and taught him the music, they rehearsed them into

Flying high – it's based on the novel by Khaled Hosseini



each scene to see how they worked. Tabla was also an important addition.

"The next most important person for me in The Kite Runner is the near-omnipresent tabla player. The tabla – Indian drums you'll see at the front of the stage – are mentioned in the script, but the use of tabla music presented me with my biggest challenge. I hadn't researched Indian music since I was at university, so

I enlisted the help of the Asian Music Network (Viram Jasani) and Emeritus Professor of Afghan Music & Ethnomusicology at Goldsmiths, John Baily.

"Viram helped me find a tabla player – Hanif Kahn – and John took me through the (very subtle!) differences between Afghan, Indian and Pakistan classical music.

"With their initial help and oversight, Hanif and I started on a five-week exploration of collaborative creativity that produced all of the tabla music in The Kite Runner. Hanif couldn't read western notation, and I couldn't understand how on earth he played such complex rhythms, so we initially just had to find a way of communicating (mostly in gestures, sounds and taps!).

The most important person is the director, who puts the team together

"In the end, some of the rhythms are original Jonathan – as in Assef's first appearance – and others are me honing and shaping traditional Indian rhythms into music cues useful for the drama, perfectly executed by Hanif on the stage."

As Jonathan and Hanif introduced more and more tabla music into the show, things started to take shape. But the one thing Jonathan never interfered with was Hanif's pre-show performance, in which he demonstrates his virtuosity.

The Kite Runner also features plenty of songs. Jonathan adds: "The songs themselves are sung live but off-stage, hidden from the audience. The singers can see the action, but we can't see them."

"I experimented with a number of ragas – Indian classical scales, akin to Western major and minor scales – to reinforce the authentic nature of The Kite Runner. In the end, the songs were based on Raag Malkauns, one of the oldest Indian ragas, each one a variation on the other (apart from the female 'wailing' song).

"The raga contains a haunting, contemplative character that lends itself well to the play."

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.



The Globe of Death



Daredevil biker stunts at contemporary circus show

After a sell-out West End run and nationwide tour, Cirque Berserk! the UK's biggest theatre-circus spectacular is coming back to the West Midlands.

After thrilling audiences at Birmingham Rep last year, the daring troupe will be at the New Alexandra Theatre from March 14 to 18 with evening and matinee shows.

Combining contemporary cirque-style artistry with adrenaline-fuelled stunt action, Cirque Berserk! is a

spectacle including the famous motorcycle Globe of Death that sees four motorcyclists reaching speeds of over 60mph within the confines of a locked steel sphere.

Audiences can also experience exhilarating acts featuring more than 30 jugglers, acrobats, aerialists, dancers, drummers and daredevil stuntpeople.

For further details see www.atgtickets.com/shows/cirque-berserk/new-alexandra-theatre-birmingham online.

Fatherhood brings a reBrand for comic

Bad boy of comedy Russell Brand will return to Birmingham's Symphony Hall tonight (Thursday) with his new show, Re:Birth.

The show came about after Brand became a parent, which he says poses the question: "How can you be a dangerous, edgy, rebel with a tiny little daughter?"

Brand brought the show to Birmingham late last year – and it was evident that much had changed since his previous tours.

He admits he's changed considerably. He told one interviewer: "Yes, I'm less mad now."



I was a needy person. I mean, that condition abides, but I manage it better now, I think."

Brand's show features his observations on Donald Trump, fatherhood and his frequently turbulent relationship with the media.

When he last visited Birmingham, he spoke at length about a disastrous interview with Jeremy Paxman and also showed that he has been willing to learn from his mistakes.

Brand says much of the change in his life came about when he met his wife, Laura Gallacher. He told one interviewer that it had changed

his approach to the way he lives – and also to money.

"I'm lucky because I have been dirty poor and now I'm stinky rich – not that rich actually, I gave away a lot. But it doesn't make that much difference. I am in a position of privilege, there's no question about it. I am not trying to motivate anyone into trying to get their hands on a stack of cash, it's more like a motivation to recognise that you probably already have what you need and, while you can purchase pleasure with a big stack of cash, you cannot purchase happiness."

A razor-sharp show from WOS

You'll never trust a barber again – the macabre tale of Sweeney Todd (played by Richard Poynton, pictured) is coming to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday. One of Stephen Sondheim's most powerful scores, this musical concerns the infamous cut-throat barber who took bloody revenge against those who wronged him in 19th century London. Don't have a pie for dinner. Walsall Operatic Society are on stage at 7.30pm plus Saturday matinee.



Symphony orchestra play Bowie favourites

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra present an orchestral tribute to The Music of David Bowie at the Symphony Hall tomorrow (Friday). Brent Havens will conduct the CBSO, joined by a rock band and West End star Tony Vincent, for new interpretations of such Bowie classics as Life on Mars, Heroes, Ashes to Ashes, Ziggy Stardust and Space Oddity. New York-based singer Tony Vincent was in the Broadway cast of Rent and went on to play the lead role of Galileo Figaro in Queen musical We Will Rock You in London, performing Bohemian Rhapsody with Queen during 2002's Party at the Palace. He went on to originate the role of St Jimmy in Green Day musical American Idiot. Before the concert, young musicians will be performing music inspired by Bowie as part of CBSO's Project Remix. See thsh.co.uk for details.

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Express & Star

CHOICE

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00 Saturday Kitchen** Live. **11.30** Classic Mary Berry. (R)

12.00 Football Focus. **1.00 BBC News;** Weather. **1.15 MasterChef.** (R) **2.15** MasterChef. (R) **3.15** Coast and Country Auctions. **4.00** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. France v England (Kick-off 4.45pm).

7.00 BBC News.

7.10 Regional Programme.

7.20 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present as famous faces take part in the general knowledge quiz in which they try to come up with the least likely correct answers to a series of questions posed to members of the public. Contestants are Bob Harris, Chris Diford, Kerry Godliman, Miles Jupp, Jenny Eclair, Linda Robson, Debbie McGee and Angels Epithemiou.

8.10 Casualty. Jac Naylor arrives in the ED and sets an ultimatum. CEO Serena Campbell wants the Rags in Resus blog to be shut down by the end of the day or its author – and Ethan – will be fired.

9.00 Troy Fall of Achilles. Achilles' shock attack on Troy's ally Cilicia devastates the Trojans and puts the spotlight on Helen. Meanwhile, Andromache receives both good and bad news, and a bitter dispute erupts between Agamemnon and Achilles. The fourth episode of David Farr's Ancient Greek historical drama based on the Trojan War and the love affair between Paris and Helen, starring Louis Hunter, David Gyasi, Bella Dayne, Chloe Pirrie, Johnny Harris, Lemogang Tsipa, David Threlfall, Frances O'Connor and Jamie-Lee Money.

10.00 BBC News; Weather; National Lottery Update.

10.20 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Manchester United v Liverpool at Old Trafford and Chelsea v Crystal Palace at Stamford Bridge.

11.45 Film: A Few Best Men. (2011) An Englishman proposes to his Australian girlfriend, but the antics of his three best men turn the wedding into a disaster. Comedy, starring Xavier Samuel.

1.15 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.20 BBC News.**

1.30 Janet Leigh

Hitchcock's Shower Scene: 78/52 (BBC2, 9pm)

Premiere. Documentary taking a look at the enduring legacy of the infamous and iconic shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho - in which Janet Leigh's character Marion Crane is stabbed to death - a segment that arguably changed the course of world cinema. The sequence took a week to film and used up a quarter of the movie's entire production schedule, requiring 78 set-ups and 52 cuts to achieve.

1.30 Janet Leigh

BBC2

6.10 The Wonder of Animals. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. (R) **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** The Denegeers. **8.00** Absolute Genius: Monster Builds. **8.30** Beyond Bionic. **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Gorilla Family and Me. (R) **11.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **12.00** Cats v Dogs: Which Is Best? (R) **1.00** Film: The Caine Mutiny. (1954) **3.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.30** Me and My Dog: The Ultimate Contest. (R) **4.30** Final Score. **5.30** Flog It! (R)

6.00 Hugh's Wild West. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall discovers how the people and animals of Dartmoor live alongside each other, visiting an ancient hill farm housing dozens of house martins and swallows.

7.00 Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby. Giles Coren and Monica Galetti visit Oman's Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar, the highest five-star hotel in the Middle East and a resort blending local tradition with modern tastes. (R)

8.00 David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities. The naturalist explores the extremes of birth in the animal kingdom, explaining why the giant panda gives birth to the smallest babies of any existing mammal.

8.30 Dad's Army. Captain Mainwaring and the platoon welcome the first American troops to Walmington-on-Sea, but Anglo-US relations become strained. Classic comedy, starring Arthur Lowe. (R)

9.00 Film: Hitchcock's Shower Scene: 78/52. (2017) Premiere. Documentary looking at the enduring legacy of the iconic shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho, a segment that arguably changed the course of world cinema.

10.30 QI XL. Extended version of the quiz in which Deirdre O'Kane, Richard Osman and David Mitchell join Alan Davies to answer Sandi Toksvig's questions on the "Occupations and Offices" theme.

11.15 Film: Dial M for Murder. (1954) A tennis player's plan to arrange the death of his socialite wife goes wrong when she kills her would-be assassin. Alfred Hitchcock's thriller, with Ray Milland and Grace Kelly.

12.55 Film: The Lady Vanishes. (1938)

2.30 Civilisations. (R) **3.25** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** The Aquabats! Super Show! (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. (R) **7.30** Scrambled: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled: The Tom and Jerry Show. **7.50** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Bagel and Beanie Show. **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Doo! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishbone. (R) **9.25** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20** Dancing on Ice. (R) **1.15** ITV News; Weather. **1.25** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Ireland v Scotland (Kick-off 2.15pm). **4.30** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs. (R) **5.00** The Chase. (R) **6.00** ITV News; Weather.

6.15 Regional Programme; Weather.

6.30 New You've Been Framed! Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers, featuring a fire extinguisher that explodes in a builder's face and a dog that looks like Andrew Lloyd Webber.

7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. The entertainment variety show continues, with James Corden taking time out from his busy schedule across the Atlantic to join the Geordie duo as this week's star guest announcer.

Plus, there's more spook mystery as Ant and Dec once again put their OBES to use as part of a task force of celebrity secret agents with honours. Stephen Mulkern is in Reading for the latest edition of In for a Penny, and in celebration of Andrew Lloyd Webber's upcoming 70th birthday, the End of the Show features some of his best-loved numbers in the studio.

8.30 The Voice UK. Tom Jones, Will.i.am, Olly Murs and Jennifer Hudson take their places on the spinning chairs once again, as the contest edges closer to its conclusion with the final battle round.

9.50 Piers Morgan's Life Stories. The host talks to comedian Jim Davidson about his life, from presenting The Generation Game and Big Break to alcohol addiction and domestic violence allegations. Last in the series.

10.40 ITV News; Weather.

11.05 Film: 2 Fast 2 Furious. (2003)

1.05 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R)

3.00 Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R)

4.30 Winter Paralympics Live. **5.00** Food Unwrapped. (R) **5.30** Streetmate. (R) **5.55** Kirstie's Fill Your House for Free. (R)

5.55 Jackpot247. **6.00** Babushka. (R)

6.00 Winter Paralympics Live. **6.30** Winter Paralympics Breakfast. **8.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.25** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. (R) **4.30** Crufts Extra with Alan and Clare. **5.30** Channel 4 News.

6.00 Winter Paralympics Today. Lee

McKenzie and Jonnie Peacock are at Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead to present action from day two of the Games in PyeongChang, South Korea, including the men's and women's downhill skiing, and Great Britain v Norway in wheelchair curling. With analysis from Charlotte Evans and Jade Etherington.

7.00 Crufts 2018. Clare Balding presents live coverage of the judging of the Vulnerable Breeds, Utility and Hound Groups and highlights of the Agility and Flyball competitions. Plus, a selection of reports involving rescue dogs, taking a look at the renovation of Manchester and Cheshire Dogs' Home following a fire and revealing why foreign rescue dog charities are growing in popularity. Plus, training tips with Carolyn Menet and advice on canine health from Noel Fitzpatrick.

9.00 Film: 45 Years. (2015) Premiere.

A woman prepares to celebrate her 45th wedding anniversary, but one week beforehand, her husband receives a letter revealing that the body of his previous partner has been found frozen in the Swiss Alps. The message exposes the cracks in their relationship. Drama, starring Charlotte Rampling, Tom Courtenay and Geraldine James.

10.50 First Dates. A woman keen to settle down and start a family has a date with an adventurer who has climbed the Matterhorn and swum oceans, while a 73-year-old has her first date for 44 years. (R)

11.55 The Inbetweeners. Will is unhappy about being forced to take a work experience job at a garage due to a mix-up that sees Neil joining a newspaper. (R)

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A woman prepares to celebrate her 45th wedding anniversary, but one week beforehand, her husband receives a letter revealing that the body of his previous partner has been found frozen in the Swiss Alps. The message exposes the cracks in their relationship. Drama, starring Charlotte Rampling, Tom Courtenay and Geraldine James.

10.50 First Dates. A woman keen to settle down and start a family has a date with an adventurer who has climbed the Matterhorn and swum oceans, while a 73-year-old has her first date for 44 years. (R)

11.55 The Inbetweeners. Will is unhappy about being forced to take a work experience job at a garage due to a mix-up that sees Neil joining a newspaper. (R)

12.30 Winter Paralympics Live. **5.00** Food Unwrapped. (R) **5.30** Streetmate. (R) **5.55** Kirstie's Fill Your House for Free. (R)

6.00 Winter Paralympics Breakfast. **8.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.25** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. (R) **4.30** Crufts Extra with Alan and Clare. **5.30** Channel 4 News.

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McKenzie and Jonnie Peacock are at Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead to present action from day two of the Games in PyeongChang, South Korea, including the men's and women's downhill skiing, and Great Britain v Norway in wheelchair curling. With analysis from Charlotte Evans and Jade Etherington.

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SUNDAY'S TV MARCH 11

Ticket 27

CHOICE



Bruce Forsyth

Sir Bruce: A Celebration (BBC1, 9pm)

Tess Daly hosts a special tribute to the veteran entertainer, who died in August last year. Filmed at the London Palladium, a variety of famous faces join Brucie's family, friends, fellow entertainers and broadcasters to celebrate his life in a variety show featuring songs, dance numbers and on-stage homages by guest with whom he shared a special connection. Includes music by Dave Arch and his Strictly Come Dancing band and vocalists, along with the BBC Concert Orchestra.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.30** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** BBC News: Weather. **12.30** MasterChef. (R) **1.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **1.55** Songs of Praise. **2.30** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Wales v Italy (Kick-off 3.00pm). **5.05** Earth's Natural Wonders. (R) **6.05** BBC News. **6.20** Regional Programme. **6.30** Countryfile. The team heads to the Scottish Lowlands to shed light on rural issues in the Lothians and the Borders. Steve Brown heads out on the trail of the elusive mud snail, which plays a crucial role in the region's ecosystem. Anita Rani cycles along the sands of the East Lothian coast on a 'fat bike', which has larger than normal tyres to avoid disturbing natural habitats, and Matt Baker reveals how the people of St Abbs fought against the odds to keep their lifeboat service running. Plus, Adam Henson visits Edinburgh's Agricultural College, where researchers are working to find a way to fix the methane problem caused by the estimated 10 million cattle in the UK. **7.30** Hold the Sunset. Edith confronts a ghost from the past when the house is broken into at night, while tensions rise between Roger and Wendy. Guest starring James Cosmo (Game of Thrones). **8.00** Call the Midwife. As the nurses and midwives prepares for Sister Monica Joan's birthday, they face an influx of new patients when a baby in utero suddenly closes. Last in the series. **9.00** Sir Bruce: A Celebration. Tess Daly tribute to the veteran entertainer, who died in August last year, with a special variety programme celebrating his life filmed at the London Palladium. **10.05** BBC News. **10.25** Regional Programme. **10.35** Match of the Day 2. Mark Chapman presents highlights of the day's two Premier League matches – Arsenal v Watford at the Emirates Stadium and Bournemouth v Tottenham Hotspur at the Vitality Stadium. **11.45** Film: Fright Night. (2011) **1.15** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.20** BBC News.

BBC2

6.10 Coast. (R) **6.55** A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **7.15** The Instant Gardener. (R) **8.05** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.35** Countryfile. (R) **9.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.00** Spring Kitchen with Tom Kerridge. (R) **11.45** Lorraine Pascale: How to Be a Better Cook. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** The Ladykillers: Pest Detectives. (R) **2.00** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.45** Film: Laura. (1944) Murder mystery, with Dana Andrews and Gene Tierney. **4.10** Back in Time for Tea. (R) **5.10** The World's Most Extraordinary Homes. (R) **6.10** Film: Deep Impact. (1998) A TV reporter investigating a presidential misdemeanour stumbles on evidence that a comet is on a collision course with Earth, threatening the future of the human race. Meanwhile, an astronaut prepares to lead his crew on a do-or-die mission to intercept the danger. Sci-fi drama, starring Robert Duvall, Tea Leoni, Morgan Freeman and Elijah Wood. **8.00** Top Gear. Matt LeBlanc and Chris Harris take second-hand sports cars on a road trip across the Japanese island of Honshu, while Roy Reid explores Tokyo's weirdest car-based subculture. **9.00** Life and Death Row: The Mass Execution. A look at capital punishment through the eyes of young people whose lives have been shaped by it, including interviews from those on death row. Last in the series. **10.20** The Mash Report. Nish Kumar and a cast of comedy correspondents present this satirical and surreal take on the news during July 2017. (R) **10.50** Top Gear: Extra Gear. Roy Reid visits a secret stash of cars in Japan, and Chris Harris hits the track in a Nissan 370Z Nismo. With guests comedian Matt Richardson and racing driver Jann Mardenborough. **11.15** Women's Six Nations Highlights. Action from the fourth round of fixtures – France v England at the Stade des Alpes in Grenoble, Wales v Italy at the Principality Stadium and Ireland v Scotland at Donnybrook. **11.45** Sign Zone Question Time. Topical debate from Westminster, chaired by David Dimbleby. (R) **12.45** Immigration: Who Should We Let In? – Panorama. (R) **1.15** Holby City. (R) **2.10** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. (R) **7.30** Scrabbled!: Scrabbled! (R) **7.50** Scrabbled!: Teen Titans Go! (R) **8.10** Scrabbled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrabbled!: Spy School. (R) **9.05** Scrabbled!: Wishart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** Love Your Garden. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** The Voice UK. (R) **12.20** ITV News: Weather. **12.30** Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway. (R) **2.00** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **2.30** Catchphrase Mother's Day Special. (R) **3.30** Tip Top Point. (R) **4.30** ITV News: Weather. **4.45** Regional Programme; Weather. **5.00** The Chase: Celebrity Special. **6.00** Dancing on Ice – The Final. Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby introduce the grand final of the competitive figure-skating contest, as the final three celebrities and the professional partners once again take to the ice as they seek to claim the title of Champion of the Rink. As ever, Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean, Jason Gardiner and Ashley Banjo form the judging panel, assessing each couple's skills and ultimately delivering the scores that will combine with the results of a public vote to determine which couple will emerge victorious. Plus, highlights of the Agily and Flyball finals and the gundog group judging, and a look back at the finalists' journey through the competition. Noel Fitzpatrick selects his favourite moments from this year's contest and there is a report on the benefits of raw dog food. **8.00** Endeavour. Morse investigates the disappearance of a teacher from a secretive school, while Thursday is determined to find a link between Eddie Nero and his murder case. Last in the series. **10.00** ITV News: Weather. **10.15** Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston, with Allegra Stratton. (R) **11.15** Six Nations Highlights. Jill Douglas presents action from the fourth round of fixtures, featuring Ireland v Scotland, France v England and Wales v Italy. **12.15** 100 Year Old Driving School. (R) **12.40** Marcela. (R) **1.30** Jackpot247. **3.00** Take on the Twisters. (R) **3.50** ITV News: Weather.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.35** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **7.00** Tennis: Tie Break Tens. **8.00** Winter Paralympics Breakfast. **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie's Quick & Easy Food. (R) **1.05** The Simpsons. (R) **1.35** The Simpsons. (R) **2.05** The Simpsons. (R) **2.35** The Simpsons. (R) **3.05** The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer. (R) **4.25** Crafts Extra with Alan and Clive. **5.30** Channel 4 News. **6.00** Winter Paralympics Today. Lee McKenzie and Jonnie Peacock are on Snow Centre in Hemel Hempstead to present action from day two of the Games in PyeongChang, South Korea. Great Britain's Kelly Gallagher and Scott Meenagh were medal hopes in the Super-G and 15km cross-country respectively, and Team GB had curling matches against Switzerland and Finland. **7.00** Crufts 2018: Best in Show. Clare Balding presents live coverage of the dog show as an overall champion is chosen from the six finalists. Plus, highlights of the Agility and Flyball finals and the gundog group judging, and a look back at the finalists' journey through the competition. Noel Fitzpatrick selects his favourite moments from this year's contest and there is a report on the benefits of raw dog food. **9.00** Homeland. Carrie's mission to free the 200 imprisoned members of the intelligence community looks up as she follows a new lead, while Saul's situation goes from bad to worse. Espionage drama, starring Claire Danes and Mandy Patinkin. **10.00** The Last Leg Winter Paralympic Special. Adam Hills, Josh Widdicombe and Alex Brooker round-up action from the 2018 Winter Paralympics in PyeongChang, with help from Noel Fielding and special guest Paralympians. **11.00** 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown. Jimmy Carr hosts the comedy panel show's version of the words-and-numbers quiz, as Jon Richardson and David Mitchell take on guest captain Joe Wilkinson and Roisin Conaty. (R) **12.00** Married at First Sight. (R) **1.00** The Inbetweeners. (R) **3.10** Winter Paralympics Live. Day three from PyeongChang, South Korea.

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! Little Princess. **6.10** Whisper. (R) **6.20** The Men Show. (R) **6.30** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.35** The Secret Life of Puppies. (R) **6.40** Motown. (R) **6.45** Simon. (R) **6.50** Simon. (R) **6.55** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.05** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.15** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.25** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.45** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.55** Blaze and the Monster Machines. **8.20** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.35** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.55** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **9.10** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.25** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.40** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.55** Peppa Pig. (R) **10.00** Peppa Pig. (R) **10.10** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.40** Football on 5: The Championships. (R) **11.30** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **12.00** Britain's Greatest Bridges. **12.15** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.15** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.15** Film: Open Season 2. (2008) Animated comedy sequel, with the voice of Joel McHale. **3.45** Film: Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2. (2013) **5.25** Film: Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **8.25** Film: Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **9.25** Teleshopping. **10.25** ITV2 Nightscreen. **11.55** A Touch of Frost. (1995) **1.55** Lewis. **6.00** The Durrells. **8.00** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs. **9.00** Joanna Lumley's Trans-Siberian Adventure. **10.00** An Audience with Victoria Wood. **11.10** Lewis. **1.10** Life of Crime. **2.00** Blue Murder. **3.20** Rising Damp. **12.20** Pawn Stars. **1.50** Film: Battle of Britain. (1969) **2.50** FYI Daily. **2.55** Film: Battle of Britain (1969). **4.30** Film: You Only Live Twice (1967). **5.35** FYI Daily. **5.40** Film: You Only Live Twice (1967). **6.50** Hornblower. **9.00** Film: Firefox (1982). **10.00** FYI Daily. **10.05** Film: Firefox (1982). **11.45** Film: Falling Down (1993). **12.50** FYI Daily. **12.55** Film: Falling Down (1993). **2.00** River Monsters. **2.50** IT4 Nightscreen. **12.00** The Big Bang Theory: Mother's Day. **4.30** The Goldbergs. **5.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine. **6.00** Young Sheldon. **6.30** The Big Bang Theory. **6.55** Film: I, Robot (2004). **9.00** Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. **10.00** Film: The World's End (2013). **12.10** The Big Bang Theory. **1.10** Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. **2.10** Timeless. **11.00** Magic in the Water (1995). **1.00** A League of Their Own (1992). **3.40** We Bought a Zoo (2011). **6.05** The Karate Kid (2010). **9.00** The Mechanic (2011). **11.00** Captive (2015). **1.00** American Hustle (2013). **3.45** Close

DIGITAL

BBC Four **7.00** Only Connect 7.30 University Challenge 8.00 Ancient Greek: The Greatest Show on Earth 9.00 Film: Michael Jackson's Journey from Motown to Off the Wall (2016) **10.30** Sings Motown 11.30 I'm Not in Love: The Story of 10cc 12.30 The Art of France 1.30 Smile: The Nation's Family Album 2.30 Sings Motown 3.30 The Beauty of Anatomy 4.00 Close

ITV2

12.20 The Voice UK 1.45 Film: The Flintstones (1994) **2.45** FYI Daily 2.50 Film: The Flintstones (1994) **3.30** Film: Dirty Dancing 2: Havana Nights (2004) **4.30** Film: Daily 4.35 Film: Dirty Dancing 2: Havana Nights (2004) **5.15** Film: Evan Almighty (2007) **6.15** FYI Daily 6.20 Film: Evan Almighty (2007) **7.10** Film: Gravity (2013) **8.15** FYI Daily 8.20 Film: Gravity (2013) **9.00** Ibiza Weekender **10.00** Family Guy 11.30 American Dad! **12.30** Film: Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **1.30** FYI Daily 1.35 Film: Zack and Miri Make a Porno (2008) **2.25** Teleshopping. **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen.

ITV3

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Film4

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Do you know an **older person** who may be **lonely** or **isolated**?

Come along and meet us on **13th March 11-2**.
FREE tea/coffee/cakes will be served. Local councillors to attend. Friendly chats - all welcome

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Halesowen Chronicle Thursday, March 8, 2018

FILM CHOICES**MONDAY****Deadly Daycare, Channel 5, 3.20pm**

A divorcee suspects nursery staff of mistreating her young daughter. When the girl's increasingly awkward behaviour arouses suspicion, the mother plants a hidden camera on the premises and discovers why the owner may hold a grudge against her. Thriller, starring Kayla Ewell, Christy Carlson Romano and Bryce Johnson. Edited for daytime broadcast. (2014)

TUESDAY**Missing Daughter, Channel 5, 3.20pm**

A couple hire a nanny to care for their adopted daughter, but the woman turns out to be someone from the husband's past intent on wrecking their marriage and lives. Thriller, starring Wes Brown, Austin Highsmith, Erin Cahill and Valerie Azlynn. Edited for daytime broadcast. (2017)

WEDNESDAY**Framed for Murder: A Fixer Upper Mystery, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

A renovator working on a 19th-century home suspects foul play when the resident of the house next door is found dead. Light-hearted mystery, starring Jewel Kilcher. Edited for daytime broadcast. (2017)



The Artist, Wednesday, BBC1, 11.45pm

The Artist, BBC1, 11.45pm

A 1920s movie actor gives an actress her big break, but his career suffers with the advent of sound. Oscar-winning silent drama, starring Jean Dujardin and Berenice Bejo. (2011)

THURSDAY**Fatal Defense, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

A woman signs up for self-defence classes. However, her handsome instructor soon develops a frightening obsession with her. Thriller, with Ashley Scott. (2017)

FRIDAY**Shanghai Knights, BBC1, 11.05pm**

A Chinese sheriff and a reformed bandit hunt for a killer on the murky streets of Victorian London. Martial arts comedy sequel, starring Jackie Chan, Owen Wilson and Aidan Gillen. (2003)

Getting the inside story of a terrifying time for Britain

Over the space of four months in spring and summer last year, four terrorist attacks took place in the UK that would change the lives of hundreds of people forever.

This 90-minute documentary, featuring accounts from witnesses and members of the emergency services who were first on the scene, tells the dramatic story of each attack, remembering those who lost their lives and hearing from those who survived.

The atrocities began in March 22, when Khalid Masood drove a hire car across Westminster Bridge in Central London, killing four pedestrians – Kurt Cochran, Leslie Rhodes, Aysha Frade and Andreea Cristea – and injuring dozens more.

After crashing his vehicle into railings close to Westminster Tube station, Masood ran into Parliament Square and fatally stabbed police officer Keith Palmer, who was posthumously awarded the George Medal, the second highest award for gallantry 'not in the face of the enemy'.

Exactly two months later, 22 people were killed when suicide bomber Salman Abedi detonated a homemade device laden with metal nuts as shrapnel in the lobby of Manchester Arena at the end of an Ariana Grande pop concert.

More than 200 people were injured in the deadliest terror attack on British soil since the 7/7 bombings in London in 2005.

The youngest victim, Saffie Roussos, was killed after becoming separated from her mum and sister at the venue. She was just eight years old.

Terror struck again in the capital the following month when three men drove a van into pedestrians on London Bridge before getting out and running into Borough Market.

Rachid Redouane, Khuram Butt and Youssef Zaghba – who were all wearing fake explosive vests – started stabbing people with long

The attack, which lasted just 82 seconds, came to an end when Masood was fatally shot in the chest by an armed officer.

Eight people were killed, with armed police shooting the three attackers dead just eight minutes after the first emergency calls are made.

Then, just 16 days later, another man, Makram Ali, died and several other people were injured when a van was driven into a group of Muslim worshippers outside a mosque in Finsbury Park, North London.

The vehicle hit pedestrians as they are leaving Ramadan night prayers around midnight.

Dad-of-four Darren Osborne, 47, from Cardiff, was subsequently charged with terrorism-related murder and attempted murder.

He was jailed for life at Woolwich Crown Court last month.

Last year has been dubbed 'Britain's Year Of Terror', and although the country still lives under the shadow of these attacks, this touching documentary shows there is hope.

knives as horrified revellers ran away and tried to barricade themselves inside bars and restaurants.

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Four Days That Shook Britain, Thursday, ITV, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY**The Repair Shop****BBC2, 6.30pm**

New series. The return of the programme in which experts try to restore family heirlooms and treasured possessions to their former glories. In the first edition, Steven Fletcher tackles an intricate Boulle-work clock that hasn't ticked for more than 15 years, while soft toy restorers Julie Tatchell and Amanda Middleditch take on a threabare wheeled elephant. Plus, woodwork specialist William Kirk gets to grips with one of the show's oldest-ever assignments in the form of a 300-year-old Georgian desk that is showing its age.

TUESDAY**Back in Time for Tea****BBC2, 8pm**

We've come to the end of this social experiment, so inevitably the Ellis family reflect on their time-travelling adventure over the past few weeks. They explore how the legacy of 100 years of history lives on in the northern diet today. Lesley and Sara Cox visit a Liverpool bakery, and sisters Caitlin and Freya examine how recent changes on Manchester's Curry Mile affect peoples' evolving relationship with flavour. Finally Sara and northern chef Rob Owen Brown prepare a celebration meal.

WEDNESDAY**Saving the British Bulldog****BBC1, 9pm**

The British bulldog is an iconic animal. It appears on memorabilia connected to our nation, and yet it's in trouble – and it's all our fault. Well, sort of. An obsession with creating the 'perfect' look for these beloved dogs has caused them to be over bred for years, resulting in serious health problems. At the start of the year, vets launched a nationwide campaign urging prospective dog owners to think twice about buying flat-faced breeds such as bulldogs. In this documentary, comedian, actress and all-round dog-lover Catherine Tate finds out more about the issue, examining the latest scientific research, which suggests controversial ways to help the breed, and ask a Kennel Club representative if they're doing enough to lend a hand.

The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story**BBC2, 9pm**

Former Glee star Darren Criss continues to shine in this

compelling slice of fact-based Miami vice centring on Andrew Cunanan. This week, TV personality and entrepreneur Marilyn Miglin returns home from a business trip to discover that her husband, Chicago real estate tycoon Lee Miglin, is missing. The police are quickly on the case to piece together

the events, while Marilyn shapes the media story. Fans of MASH should look out for Mike Farrell in a supporting role, while

Transparent star Judith Light lends able support.

THURSDAY**Still Game****BBC1, 9.30pm**

The news that the local undertaker has died and a creepy replacement has moved into town causes much commotion among the Clansman regulars. Nobody quite

knows what to make of the new arrival, with Isla spreading



Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago, Friday, BBC2, 9pm

stories that he could be the Grim Reaper himself. And despite their initial bravado, Jack and Victor are spooked when the man himself turns up in the pub, so they decide to find out who this mysterious new figure really is. Comedy, written by and starring Ford Kiernan and Greg Hemphill, with Jane McCary, Bruce Morton, Gavin Mitchell and Sanjeev Kohli.

FRIDAY**Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago****BBC2, 9pm**

Last year, Debbie McGee showed off her twinkle toes on Strictly Come Dancing, but her feet are going to take even more punishment in this new series, which sees her and six other celebrities putting on their backpacks and walking boots to tackle the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. The ancient 780km path across northern Spain to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela and the shrine of St James usually takes at least a month to walk, but as Debbie and her fellow celebs actor Neil Morrissey, comedian Ed Byrne, singer Heather Small, priest Kate Bottley, journalist Raphaell Howe and TV presenter JJ Chalmers have just 15 days in which to complete it, they will travel some of it by minibus. But they will still be doing plenty of walking, as well as reflecting on whether a medieval pilgrimage has any relevance in the modern day.

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Turtley awesome Caribbean food

WITH friends down for the weekend – and not a child in sight – we decided to look for somewhere with a bit of a party atmosphere that didn't break the bank and also had a reputation for good food.

Venturing in to Birmingham city centre, there is a fair amount to choose from but one style of food I had always wanted to experience but never had – other than at music festivals when the tastebuds weren't exactly at the top of their game – was Caribbean food.

When thinking of Caribbean cooking, the mind immediately wanders to scotch bonnets, coconut milk, all spice, fantastic rubs and seasoning for all sorts of meats and fish – and of course, jerk sauce. So, after a short debate, we settled on Turtle Bay, which sits on the corner of the bustling John Bright Street.

COCKTAILS

Plenty of bars and restaurants have opened up in that area of Birmingham and there is a lot of competition, so it speaks volumes for Turtle Bay that is was absolutely packed when we arrived just after 4pm.

Friday and Saturday evenings get very busy, especially as the restaurant prides itself on serving fresh food, but we arrived purposely early so we could sample a few of the cocktails, which were two-for-one during certain times. And it's fair to say the Saturday night party atmosphere was already in full swing as we went to the bar to order our drinks.

Where to start with the cocktail menu? To say the list is extensive would be an understatement. But if you like a cocktail, or fancy popping somewhere to try one as a one-off, Turtle Bay would be a good place to start.

It was a little earlier than the 5pm reservation time but the staff were happy to seat us, which was a nice touch. For those who like sharing, the 'cutters' section would



Babyback pork ribs – just one of the many choices



Bright lights and buzzing atmosphere inside

be ideal because you can choose either three dishes for £14 or four for £18. The idea is inspired by beach shacks and street vendors across the Caribbean islands, and the dishes are also perfect for a starter.

We shared a starter per couple, opting for crispy spiced panko coated squid, mango mole, fresh lime and jerk mayo. When it came to the mains it was a challenge to pick just one meal from the large choice on offer.

During a weekday, had we not been planning a few drinks after, the goat curry would have pretty much been a sure-fire pick for me. In the end I settled for West

Indian steamed snapper, as it seemed a bit lighter. The snapper fillet came served in light coconut curry sauce, garlic, ginger, scotch bonnet, sweet onion chutney and fresh coconut shavings. I could not have chosen better.

My wife, Kelly, went for the grilled jerk marinated pork ribs, served with sweet potato fries, sour orange chutney and Caribbean slaw. Kelly doesn't like her food too spicy, so the coconut sauce with the meat was ideal.

Our friend Jo went for the pit-grilled two-way chicken burger, which was a spicy panko crumb chicken fillet and pulled jerk chicken, served with tomato and fresh

pineapple chow and her fiancé, Dale, chose half a pit-grilled chicken, coconut rice 'n' peas, sour orange chutney, coconut shavings and Caribbean slaw. He said the meal looked really good but lacked a bit of the flavour the description warranted.

We didn't fancy a pudding but there were plenty of options available.

It wouldn't be fair to review Turtle Bay without reaffirming how good the atmosphere was. Highly recommended if you fancy somewhere a bit more upbeat.

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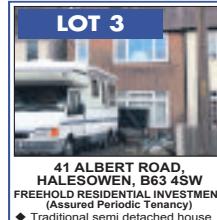
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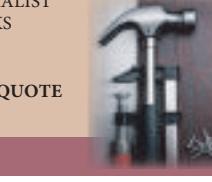
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Long waiting list for this dream car

By Carmel Stewart

If you are thinking of buying a McLaren 720S then best pal up with a couple of friends similarly inclined and drive in convoy.

The car in front will not only afford a delightful view of the sleek and sporty rear of McLaren's latest gift to performance driving, but it will also allow full aural appreciation of the unmistakable rumble of McLaren's mighty 4.0 litre V8 turbocharged engine.

The car behind will give you a view of the beautifully crafted front end while, in the two-seater cabin of the car in the middle, you can delight in all the wonderful gadgets and gizmos including the excellent satellite navigation.

Access is far less problematical than in the 650S it replaces but remember to give yourself plenty of elbow room either side to open the gull wing doors and wear your best bloomers, just in case.

Behind the wheel, once you have stopped worrying about oncoming traffic, hedgerows, pot holes and other potential damaging hazards, the McLaren 720S is as wonderful to drive as it is to look at.

It is agile, involving and surprisingly comfortable, with the precise, well-weighted steering, the power smoothly and seamlessly delivered via the seven-speed automatic transmission, all making for a thoroughly rewarding drive, very slightly off set by encroaching road noise.

The set-up includes an active dynamic panel whereby the driver can select comfort, sport or track which subtly alter the gearing ratios and suspension settings.

Capable of producing 720ps, it'll zap from 0 to 60mph in 2.8 seconds and on to a top



Luxury inside for two plus space for weekend bags



It is agile with precise well-weighted steering



A pause in a car park to change drivers had men, women and children flocking round with 'phones at the ready for selfies

speed of 212mph, when you have the space and the freedom.

And be in no doubt, this car is a real head turner. A brief pause in a public car park to change drivers had men, women and children flocking round with 'phones at the ready for selfies and the like.

Although there is only room for two, luggage space is more than adequate for soft weekend bags.

Supermarket shopping is not to be

recommended, firstly because it would be a crime to use this car for something so mundane and secondly because negotiating the speed humps requires an electric nose lifting procedure which takes just a few seconds but would spoil the driving flow if repeated multiple times.

Prices start at £208,600 for the standard model, although really nothing about this perfect automotive delight is standard. A step up to Performance or indeed Luxury requires

a slightly deeper dig for upwards of £218,020.

If you are seriously considering buying one then be prepared for a wait – each car is hand assembled at the McLaren Production Centre in Woking, Surrey and, despite the price tag, it is proving exceedingly popular. More than 400 orders were placed within days of the initial announcement. The order books are now chock-a-block until the summer, but patience and deep pockets should have you behind the wheel of this dream car in time to enjoy the

summer sunshine sparkling on the bonnet.

The company is totally independent so there are no parts or even ideas of any other manufacturer to be found anywhere on its vehicles. It produces between 4,000 and 5,000 cars a year and has no plans to increase production.

While awaiting the arrival of your 720S supercar you could while away an hour or so putting together a Lego Speed Champion version at the modest starting price of £12.99.

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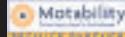
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Corsa marks 25 years with great deal

By James Parker

Vauxhall marks a birthday with 25 things you may not know about the iconic Corsa.

An era famous for Britpop, Walkmans, shell suits and The Spice Girls, the 1990s was a standout decade for British culture that welcomed another icon in 1993 – the Vauxhall Corsa.

Offer

One of the nation's most beloved vehicles, the Corsa, is celebrating its 25th year in the UK, and to mark the occasion Vauxhall is offering a brand new Corsa from just £149 per month, with a £149 initial rental* – just in time for it to wear a new '18' plate, too.

In a deal that would have surprised buyers back in 1993, let alone 2018, the Vauxhall Corsa on offer – an Energy three-door 1.4 (75PS) – is worlds apart from its original namesake.

For example, who'd have thought 25 years ago that a personal assistant could be accessed directly from the comfort of your car via Corsa's clever OnStar system?

But Vauxhall's best-seller has always moved with the times.

The Corsa was born with cassette players and now offers Apple CarPlay; its most popular engines have almost doubled in power; and its interior dimensions have grown significantly. But while design and tech have changed over 25 years, the Corsa's amazing value hasn't, its price only increasing by £3,850.

The original Corsa Supermini was first



A new Corsa could cost just £149 per month



The Corsa A was rebadged as the "Vauxhall Nova" between 1983 and 1993

introduced alongside supermodels Kate Moss, Naomi Campbell, Christy Turlington and Linda Evangelista.

Like Kate Moss, who also made her screen debut at the time, the Corsa has been part of British culture since 1993.

As Vauxhall's best-selling model, over two



The performance version of the Corsa, the VXR

million have been sold in the United Kingdom – that's the equivalent of nine purchases an hour.

Leon Caruso, retail sales director at Vauxhall Motors comments: "The Corsa has played such an integral part in British culture over the past 25 years, I think it'd be difficult to

find someone who hasn't owned or had a friend or family member who has owned a model.

"That's why we're celebrating the Corsa's quarter-century anniversary year with our best-ever offer: a Corsa Energy for just £149 per month, with a £149 initial rental*. I encourage

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Official Government Test Environmental Data. Fuel consumption figures mpg (litres/100km) and CO₂ emissions (g/km). Corsa Limited Edition Range: Urban: 42.8 (6.6) – 47.1 (6.0), Extra-urban: 64.2 (4.4) – 67.3 (4.2), Combined: 54.3 (5.2) – 57.6 (4.9). CO₂ emissions: 122 – 113g/km.[#]

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BRITISH BRAND SINCE 1903



Geoff seen in conversation last March during a special 'Smile for Joel' fundraising event which took place at The Saddlers



Geoff celebrates scoring the second goal against Portsmouth on August 20, 2005, after the Baggies stayed up



During his time at Birmingham City, against Fulham, Geoff with Rufus Brevett



Geoff in 2009, with the famous back page of THAT season, at the Hawthorns

Geoff's on target with charity to help homeless

SPORTING FEATURE

By Steve Jones

'My aim is to get people off the streets and get them back into normality and normal society.'

HIS football career started out playing on the streets – now Geoff Horsfield is helping people get off the streets with his charity venture.

After his retirement the Baggies hero has made it his goal to help those in need across the West Midlands.

His charity the Geoff Horsfield Foundation, which was set up in 2016, provides 'quality, safe and secure supported accommodation' for vulnerable adults in the region.

It marks the latest step in a less than conventional career, which saw Geoff start as a bricklayer and toil in the lower leagues before making it big.

Geoff, now aged 44, also successfully battled testicular cancer in 2008 – defying doctors who predicted the disease would end his career.

The striker was certainly no ordinary footballer.

And after hanging up his boots in 2013, Geoff has continued to prove he is an extraordinary man by focusing on charitable enterprises.

Epidemic

Now he is aiming to help tackle homelessness in the West Midlands, and has returned to the bricklaying skills he learned before hitting the footballing big time.

The star personally renovates homes before new tenants – often from the streets – are moved in.

Geoff, who lives in Sutton Coldfield, said: "Homelessness around the country has become an epidemic.

"We're in 2018 and we've got cars that can park themselves but we've still got homeless people in the streets. If we can't help them there's something wrong."

"My aim is to get people off the streets and get them back into normality and normal society. We try to help them as much as possible."

"I thought with my name and the people I know I could help these people, and it's fantastic that people are coming forward and trying to help."

"Football makes the world go round."

The foundation's work also involves providing basic essentials such as food, clothes and sanitary towels for women.

Much of this relies on donations, often from foot-

ball fans far and wide that put their allegiances to one side.

"The generosity is overwhelming, it's been incredible," Geoff continued.

"There's more going on in the world than the badge on the shirt."

"It's nice that we can forget about the football. They have been absolutely fantastic, all the fans."

Geoff's footballing journey began in modest surroundings in his native Barnsley and he combined his playing with work as a bricklayer – a trade he has returned to through his charity work, renovating accommodation before tenants move in.

Looking back on his earliest footballing memories, Geoff said: "I was playing on the streets. I just naturally scored goals, 10 or 11 a game. I played Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning and it just took off."

"I was bricklaying and playing in the local leagues. My dad took me there to toughen me up a bit."

"All the lads I played with were 10 years older than me and they all had trades and offered me an apprenticeship with them."

"It set me in good stead for later life."

Geoff was Albion's top scorer when the Baggies were promoted to the Premier League at the end of the 2003/4 campaign – and they could probably do with his goals now as they battle relegation.

His career at the club peaked when he scored one of the most famous goals in their history to help preserve their top-flight status on the final day of the 2004/05 season.

"Coming on and scoring that goal, I think that's

got to be one of the highlights of my career alongside getting promotion under Gary Megson," he said.

In 2008 Geoff overcame testicular cancer and shortly afterwards resumed his professional career, a testament to his strength of character.

He admits helping the homeless is a million miles away from his career on the pitch.

"It is hugely different, but I wouldn't stop it for the world. I still watch out for my old teams but what I'm doing now is a full-time job," Geoff said.

"It's totally different from football, it makes me realise how lucky I was to be a professional football player."

He also moved to defend his peers, who can be accused of doing little to help others.

Geoff said: "I don't know if that [accusation] is true."

"There are a lot of footballers who do it and don't publicise it. I publicise it to raise awareness of people being homeless."

"I think footballers are tarred with the wrong brush at times, a lot of them do good."

Fundraiser

A charity night which is coming up soon will help raise funds for Geoff's Foundation.

As well as Albion fan and British middleweight champion Tommy Langford, some of Geoff's former Baggies team mates, including Darren Moore and Paul Robinson, are planning to attend the fundraiser.

"We've always kept close, I'll do anything for them and they'll do anything for me," he said.

"We're trying to raise as much money as we can; it really will be a good night."

The event will take place at Birmingham's Botanical Gardens on Friday, March 23. Entertainment includes live music and a DJ, a drag artist, and a comedian.

Catering will also be provided by award-winning Indian restaurant Itihaa.

An auction taking place on the night includes a match day box at the Hawthorns, worth £4,000.

Tickets are available through online ticketing outlet Eventbrite and are priced at £65 per person plus booking fees, with VIP options also available.

Meanwhile donations can also be made to the Geoff Horsfield Foundation at JustGiving.com.

Back-to-back Sunday games for Baggies

ALBION are scheduled to play back-to-back Sunday games in April after two of their fixtures were moved to be broadcast live on Sky Sports.

The Baggies' trip to Old Trafford to face Manchester United is now at 4pm on Sunday, April 15, while the home game against Liverpool a week later is scheduled for 2.15pm on Sunday, April 22.

However, if Liverpool reach the semi-finals of the Champions League that match may have to be moved again.

Those two games represent the start of a difficult run-in for the Baggies. There will only be 12 points to play for after the United game and nine points available after the Liverpool game.

Meanwhile, Villa's trip to Norwich City on Saturday April 7 has been moved forward – just 24 hours after being moved back. Sky had moved the game from 3pm to a 5.30pm kick-off. However, it has now been rescheduled again and will kick-off at 12.30pm. The decision was made to accommodate Manchester City versus Manchester United at 5.30pm.

Deals hampered by sell-on clause – Troy

EX-WALSALL forward Troy Deeney admits the sell-on clause negotiated by Saddlers when he joined Watford has become a transfer 'sticking point'.

The 29-year-old striker was a £16million target for Albion in January, before the Baggies opted to sign Darren Sturridge on loan from Liverpool.

Watford would receive 20 per cent of any profit above the £500,000 they sold Deeney to the Hornets for in 2010 – and the forward believes it has put potential suitors off.

"There's times where it has become a sticking point," said Deeney. "People go like 'We're going to pay X amount of money' but then Watford say 'We've got to give X amount to Walsall'. There's been times where I've tried to speak to (Saddlers chairman) Jeff Bonser and try to, you know, be sensible."

"But I understand a million per cent from his point of view, he's like 'We asked for this, this is what we're getting'. It's just business at the end of the day but I think that ship is long sailed now."

Online service just the ticket for fans

WOLVERHAMPTON Speedway have launched a new online ticket service for supporters ahead of the 2018 season. Supporters can now purchase tickets for home meetings in advance using wolverhamptonspeedway.co.uk

The service is operated in conjunction with ticketarena.co.uk

The move gives fans added convenience and will speed entry up on arrival at the turnstiles as the Parrys International Wolves battle for SGB Premiership glory. Opening night at Monmore is on Monday March 26 against a powerhouse Pools side.

Press and practice is open to the public from 6.30 on Monday March 19 with the popular pre-season talk-in at the Cleveland Arms the following night.

Club legends Peter Karlsson and Mikael Max were set to fly in from Sweden for a special 'Wolves Brothers' show at the Cleveland Arms on Sunday, but have rescheduled for July 19.

Sport

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Former Baggies ace on target to help homeless

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Yozza out of darts FA Cup in round four

BLACK Country darts player Jamie Hughes bowed out of the UK Open at the fourth-round stage.

Tipton ace Hughes averaged 95 in his first PDC major tournament since switching from rival organisation the BDO.

'Yozza' pushed Ian White, but the Stoke thrower squeezed through to reach the last 16 at Butlin's, Minehead.

Jason Lowe, from Cradley Heath, enjoyed an excellent qualifying campaign in Wigan two weeks ago, meaning he came up against John Scott in the second round.

A crucial 116 finish in the fifth leg of the match broke the Scott throw and put Lowe on the way to confirming his place in the last 32 of the 'FA Cup of darts'. But he then fell 10-5 to Chris Dobey.

'Flying Scotsman' Gary Anderson won the tournament, beating Australian Corey Cadby in Sunday's final.

Joining the 96 professionals for the three-day tournament were 32 wildcards made up of qualifiers from Riley's Sports bars, including four from the chain's Wolverhampton venue.

John Morris, of Wolverhampton, bowed out in the opening round to former world champion John Part, while Dudley's Liam Kelly also fell at the first hurdle, 6-0 to Liam Humphries, who then knocked out Wednesfield's Wayne Jones.

Mark Craddock of Cannock, and Andrew Pullen, both made the second round, beaten by Ryan Meikle and Nathan Aspinall respectively.

First defeat for Stourbridge opens up indoor league

STOURBRIDGE lost to Oldswinford in the final over to end their unbeaten start to the WCB Indoor Cricket League.

Runs were hard to find as Stourbridge, batting first, totalled 87-4 with Matt Bradley hitting 39 and Scott Ludlam 25.

Oldswinford lost two wickets in the first three overs for just 16. A tight finish looked in store until Paddy Addis (28 no) joined Matt Watts (35 no) and the former hit the winning runs in the 12th over.

In the other game, Pedmore (131-5) lost to Coombes Wood (132-2) with an over remaining.

Pedmore started positively and lost a wicket to a run out on 37. John Hurdman (27) joined Paul Taylor (41 no) and a large total looked likely. With Taylor's retirement they lost John Wenham but Matt Porter scored an enterprising 22. Taylor re-entered the fray and pushed up the total.

In reply, Coombes Wood went after the bowling with Carl Whyte 28 no and Dan Jones 26 no. After they retired, Pedmore were unable to stem the flow of runs, and, with a quickfire Mike Langford 20, Coombes Wood won within 11 overs.

Backing puts sisters on right track



Iris, Councillor Paul Moore and Josie

TWO sisters are making huge strides in their bid to become top international athletes – after being backed by Sandwell's Gifted and Talented scheme.

Josie and Iris Oliarnyk, who both represent Halesowen Athletic & Cycle Club, have been backed by the Sandwell Council programme and have made huge improvements to get to national and international standards.

Josie, aged 15, is currently second in the UK for her age group at long jump and recently competed for England in Bratislava.

She competed in the British Championship in Birmingham against the likes of Olympic athlete Katarina Johnson-Thompson.

Iris, 14, is Midland Champion for the shot and ranked second in the UK for triple jump. At the recent Midland Championships she achieved two personal bests, in the shot and the triple jump.

There was more success at the England Athletics Age Group nationals in Sheffield as Josie came fourth overall with a long jump of 6.02 metres, a new personal

best, with Iris coming second in the triple jump, also with a personal best of 11.99 metres making her second in the UK.

They have been supported by the Gifted and Talented scheme and cabinet member Councillor Paul Moore said: "It is very pleasing to hear that these very talented sisters are making such a mark in their chosen events."

So far 18 people have been supported giving them help to compete in sports, including athletics, swimming, hockey, tennis, gymnastics and karate.

New car has motoring ace Neal purring



Matt Neal's new motor

STOURBRIDGE racer Matt Neal says he cannot wait to get behind the wheel of his new Halford Yuasa Honda Civic Type R for the start of the British Touring Car Championship.

The covers were lifted on Neal's Type R at Parcmotor Castelloli, just outside Barcelona. It will be subjected to a near week-long test at the circuit ahead of the 2018 Dunlop MSA British Touring Car Championship.

Triple BTCC champion Neal and new signing Dan Cammish are scheduled to get their first taste of the car in Spain, before heading home to Brands Hatch and Donington Park for further track-time and development.

The team will unveil the 2018 livery at their brand-new factory on March 22.

The championship's official season launch is at Donington Park, on March 27. The opening rounds are at Brands Hatch on April 7 and 8.

Neal, from Stourbridge, said: "I can't wait to jump in and get out on track."

Leaders' four-goal salvo hits Glassboys

Altrincham 4 Stourbridge 1

GLASSBOYS slumped to a heavy defeat at title-chasing Altrincham on Tuesday night, a four-goal first half blast doing the damage.

It took the Premier Division leaders 13 minutes to open their tally through Connor Hampson. The advantage was doubled just two minutes later by James Poole, who added his second on 25 minutes. The fourth came seven minutes before the break through John Johnston.

A power cut threatened to halt the rampant leaders in their stride. But the second half was played and Glassboys Luke Shearer scored the only goal.

HUGHES SIGNS FOR THE YELTZ

HALESOWEN Town have secured the signing of ex-Baggies star Lee Hughes.

The striker, who netted 99 times in 237 league and cup appearances over two spells at the Hawthorns, will bring a much-needed boost to the Yeltz forward line.

Hughes began his career with Kidderminster Harriers before The Baggies paid a fee that rose to £380,000. He joined Coventry City for £5,000,001, a fee that triggered his release clause, before returning to West Brom in 2002 for £2.5million.

Since then, Hughes has played for Blackpool, Oldham Athletic, Notts County and Port Vale before dropping out of the football league to join Forest Green Rovers and also had a spell at Telford before becoming joint player/manager at Worcester City. In a 20-year career, the 41-year-old Smethwick-born striker has scored more than 350 goals.

Hughes joins Ahmed Ali and Daniel Byrnes as new acquisitions at Halesowen.

Popular

Ali, a 27-year-old central midfielder, has signed from Bromsgrove Sporting, where he was a popular figure. Ali said: "I leave Bromsgrove Sporting with a heavy heart. But I would like to personally thank John Hill and Matt Clarke for their efforts in allowing me to join Halesowen Town Football Club."

"I believe this is a good step in my footballing career and I am looking forward to the challenge ahead."

Former Wales youth international Daniel Byrnes, who began his career at Oldham Athletic, joined the club from Clitheroe.

Aged 21, he has won international honours for Wales at under-15, under-16 and under-17 levels.

All three new signings are in contention for a



New signing Lee Hughes with management team John Hill and Matt Clarke

place in Saturday's squad as the Yeltz travel to Ashton United.

Meanwhile, a number of ex-Baggies players will line up at The Grove for a tribute match to former Albion club mascot Richard Eades next month.

The 42-year-old, who donned the Albi bird suit

for a decade, died in December. He had worked

at Albion since his teenage years. A match in his

memory will be held on Sunday, April 29 with the

likes of Andy Johnson, Kevin Donovan, Darren

Moore, Sean Gregan and Geoff Horsfield all set to feature.

Tickets are £5. Close pal Dave Challoner, who plays Baggie Bird, has helped to organise the event. He said: "It's a chance for everyone to come and enjoy a day of football and fun in memory of Eadesy."

"All the money raised will go towards Eadesy's

children, who have been dealt a cruel blow in losing

their dad so early in their lives."

★★★

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